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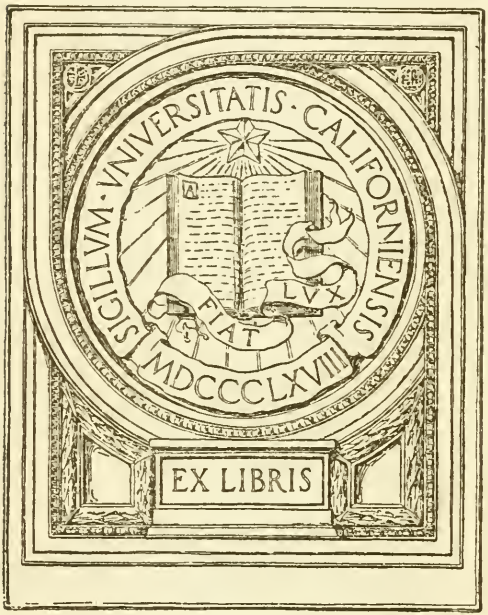

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Christmas Selections

For Readings and Recitations

Compiled by

Rosamond Livingstone McNaught

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PHILADELPHIA

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

1911

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Christmas Selections

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THE CHRISTMAS TREE

By permission of "The American Primary Teacher," Boston

YOU come from a land where the snow lies deep
In forest grand, on mountain steep;
Where the days are short, and the nights are long,
And never a sky-lark sings his song.
Have you seen the wild deer in his mountain home,
And watched the descent of the brown pine cone?
Do you miss your mates in the land of snow,
Where none but the evergreen branches grow?
Dear tree, we will dress you in robes so bright,
That ne'er could be seen a prettier sight;
In glittering balls, and tinkling bells,
And the star which the story of Christmas tells;
On every branch we will place a light,
That will send its gleam through the starry night,
And the little children will gather there
And carol their songs in voices fair;
And we hope that you never will homesick be,
You beautiful, beautiful Christmas tree.

A FEEL IN THE CHRISTMAS AIR

By permission of "The Cosmopolitan," New York

THEY'S a kind o' feel in the air, to me,
When the Chris'mas time sets in,
That's about as much of a mystery
As ever I've run agin!—
Fer instunce, now, whilse I gain in weight
An' gineral health, I swear
They's a gone-ness somers I can't quite state—
A kind o' feel in the air.

They's a feel in the Chris'mas air goes right
To the spot where a man lives at!—
It gives a feller an appetite—
They ain't no doubt about that!—
And yit, they's somepin'—I don't know what—
That follows me here and there,
And ha'nts and worries and spares me not—
A kind o' feel in the air!

Is it the racket the children raise?
W'y, no!—God bless 'em!—no!
Is it the eyes and the cheeks ablaze—
Like my own wuz, long ago?—
Is it the bleat o' the whistle and beat
O' the little toy drum, and blare
O' the horn?—No! No!—It's jest the sweet—
The sad-sweet feel in the air.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

THE NORTH WIND'S CHRISTMAS TOUR

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

IT was the last month of the year, and the last half of the last month, the very busiest and most perplexing, as well as the most interesting and delightful time of the year, because it brings with it that day of all days—Christmas.

The Christmas bustle and stir were in full tide all over the globe, and away up in his far northern home the old North Wind was making ready for his December tour around the world.

"Bless me!" he blustered, glancing at his calendar—the sun—"the year is almost ended and Christmas will be here in a few days. I must hurry, or I'll not get off in time to help Santa Claus with his work, and he is unusually busy this year, I understand, and needs my help."

Now it would have surprised some people, who consider the North Wind a cold, gruff, boisterous old fellow, to hear him talk of taking part in the Christmas festivities, and in the rôle of helper to good old Santa Claus, too; but he spoke in a very matter-of-fact tone, and went on with his preparations for his journey just as though a Christmas tour and helping Santa Claus were quite a matter of course and the regular order of things with him.

"Well, I'm off," said the old fellow at last, his preparations completed, and with a whirl of his coat-tails that sent the snowflakes flying in every direction, away he went. Up hill and down, through the valley, over lake and river and pond, past field

and village and town, he sped, filling the air with flying snowflakes and covering the earth with ice from his frosty breath.

"It will make Christmas so much merrier for the children and young folks," he roared to himself. "And I noticed that the older folks like a bit of snow and ice, too, at Christmas, to say nothing of how much easier it makes things for Santa Claus and his reindeer."

"Hello! Guess we're going to have a spell of weather," said the farmer, looking out over his brown meadows. "Mighty glad to see this snow, too. The wheat needed it, and crops are always better when snow sets in at Christmas. Regular norther we're having," he added. "Guess maybe I'd better take a load of wood and some potatoes and truck over to Widow Jones Christmas morning. Those young ones of hers have good hearty appetites, and the widow's so high-spirited, a body can't do much to help her out. But this cold snap'll be a good excuse, and she can't object to a Christmas present." And he went into the house to consult with his wife about the kind of "truck" most likely to be acceptable to the Jones family.

"Whew! how cold it's getting," exclaimed the merchant, as a blast of cold air rushed into the well-heated store from an opening door. "Snowing, too; that's good. This will help trade immensely. We always have a fine trade when we have a cold, snowy Christmas. This change in the weather is worth a thousand dollars to me. I can afford to give the wife and children a

pretty good Christmas this time, thanks to old Boreas."

Then came the thought of those to whom Christmas brought no good cheer except as charity should bestow it, and going to his desk, he filled out a check for fifty dollars and sent it to the committee who were arranging a Christmas feast for the poor and neglected of the city.

Meanwhile the North Wind, still speeding on his journey, had reached the warm southland, where the terrible Fever Spectre had been holding high carnival for weeks, seizing upon men, women and children and laying them upon beds of suffering and pain, and in many cases death, bringing to the homes of the land gloom and sorrow and filling all hearts with fear and dread.

"Aha!" said the old North Wind, as he saw the state of things, "this is where I'm needed. I'll soon put an end to this. A pretty Christmas they'd have here if this went on!"

And giving his cloak an indignant whirl, he rushed over the land so fiercely and determinedly that the Fever Spectre, who had hesitated and faltered in his work of destruction at the first icy breath of the North Wind, now dropped everything and fled in terror and dismay before the indignant old fellow's terrible blasts, leaving his poor victims pale and weak, but happy and thankful enough over his departure and their escape from his clutches.

"Thank God for this north wind," said the doctor, returning from his round of visits to his patients. "This frost and snow will effectually end the fever's

ravages, and we shall have a right Merry Christmas yet."

"There!" panted the North Wind, "that finishes my journey, and now I must get back home in time for my own Christmas dinner. Hello! what's this?" and darting down the chimney of a big tenement house over which he was passing, he brought up a slip of paper on which something was printed in a child's unskilful hand.

"Thought maybe I'd find some little matters to attend to on my way home, and here's one of them now. Looks like one of those letters Santa Claus is always getting from the children. Yes, that's what it is," he continued, blowing the folded sheet open and examining it hastily. "A letter to Santa Claus from some of those poor little fellows in that big, forlorn house. I suppose I missed it when I went this way before, and now it's too late to get it to Santa Claus in time for him to attend to it, for I'll not get home to-night before he starts out on his trip. I'll just have to look after it myself."

All this time he was twirling the little soot-stained note around thoughtfully and tossing it from one hand to the other. But now he caught it up, puffed out his cheeks, and with one strong whiff of his breath sent it flying, across streets and houses, straight to the window of a pleasant, comfortable-looking house a few blocks away, where it fluttered, fell, and rested on the broad window-sill.

"Oh, mamma! what's that?" exclaimed a young girl sitting in an easy chair close to the window, as the little letter danced before her, and quickly open-

ing the window, she drew in the little missive, eagerly unfolded it and read:

"Deer Santy claws plese cum to our hous and bring us som crismus gifts. and we will lov you.

"ROBBIE and MINNIE BROWN."

"Oh, mamma," said the child, "if we only knew where they live, we could send them some Christmas gifts. There's the doll I dressed, and the scrapbooks I made; and I have enough pennies to buy something for the little boy, if we only could find them," and the sweet voice was trembling with excitement and regret.

"Well, dear," said the mother, smiling at the child's eagerness, "I think we can find them, for on this side of the children's letter is the name of the street and the number of the house. Some one has evidently begun a letter and got no further than that. But this is all we need; and when Aunt Alice comes I will get her to sit with you while I go out and hunt up your little protegés."

"Oh, goody, goody!" exclaimed the little girl, clapping her hands joyously. "And if you find them I shall have a happy, happy Christmas, for I could not bear to have everybody doing so much for me and I not doing anything for anybody."

The North Wind had lingered to see if his further services would be needed in behalf of the children's letter, but on hearing this he laughed softly and resumed his journey. "No need to give myself any uneasiness about that," he chuckled. "The Brown youngsters will have a Merry Christmas without any

more help from me," and he moved briskly on. "Time's flying," he muttered, "and I must be getting home; but there's just one more matter I must look after, if it takes the rest of the day." And gathering up his cloak with a determined air, he swooped down upon a highly respectable looking and unsuspecting gentleman walking briskly along the street, and lifting his hat from his head, carried it off down the street and around the corner at a great rate.

The gentleman followed as quickly as possible, but he was not so brisk as the North Wind, and would have given up the chase in despair; but a boy, light of weight and swift of foot, came to his help and soon brought back the missing property.

The gentleman thanked his young helper, and noticing how scanty was his clothing for such a cold, snowy day, was prompted to ask his name.

When the boy gave the information asked, the gentleman turned pale, hesitated, then asked where he lived. The boy told him, and the man turned paler still; then taking the boy by the arm, he said in a choked tone:

"You must be my nephew—my sister's child. We disagreed when we were young, and I haven't seen her since. I thought she was living in a distant city. Take me to her."

And as the rich, prosperous man went off with the poorly-dressed boy to find his sister, the North Wind laughed aloud with delight and capered about like some giddy, frisky little April breeze.

"A good day's work, and now for home," he

said, settling down to a steady, even pace. "I confess I'm a trifle blown and somewhat warmed up, and shall be glad to have a chance to cool off and get my breath."

As he drew near to his own comfortable quarters, he met Santa Claus just starting out on his Christmas eve tour.

"Many thanks for your help," shouted that jolly fellow, "and a Merry Christmas to you."

But the North Wind's work was not complete until he had presented himself to his Master and made his report. When he had finished, the Christmas Angels gathered about him and sang a beautiful Christmas carol to his praise. But the Christ Child, whose birthday is the Christmas Day, and who is the Master of the North Wind and Santa Claus and all the Christmas Angels, smiled approvingly upon him and said, "Well done."

JENNIE WHITE

WHAT SANTA CLAUS THINKS

By permission of "School and Home Education," Bloomington, Ill.

HI! another one! What's all the world about?
Don't these people know that I'm most worn out?
Millions of 'em coming year by year;
Every youngster wretched if I don't appear.

First, they want a rattle, then a ring to bite;
Then a box of sugar-plums, then a doll, or kite;

Next a story-book to read, then a bat and ball,—
Santa's back is broad and strong, he must bring them all.

Gratitude they talk about,—not a bit for me.
First you know they get so wise, cry out, "Fiddle-de-de!
No such chap as Santa Claus!" Can't deceive them so;
Never find a six-inch stocking hanging in the row.

Here's this jolly little chap, scarcely here a week;
Don't I know he rules the house, though he looks so meek;
Both his eyelids shut up tight, mouth wide open, too.
S'pose he got a look at me, wonder what he'd do?

Sleep away, my little man; trouble comes with years;
You are bound to yet your share, in this vale of tears.
Rattle, is it? Well, all right! Yes, I've got my pen;
Finish out your little nap and I'll be round again.

THE CHRISTMAS BOX

THE rehearsal for the Christmas exercises was over. Most of the children had left the church, and the few who lingered to talk of Christmas and

its anticipated pleasures took no notice of a plainly-dressed little girl standing near the door. Betty had stopped inside the church to put on her wraps because the hall was occupied by a group of ladies, discussing the plans for the coming holiday.

"Well, it ought to be a success," remarked one. "I'm sure we've worked hard enough. I thought they all did real well this afternoon."

"These boxes must be sent out this evening, too," said another. "Where do they all go? Here's one marked Evans; that's the name of one of the children in the exercises. Yes, little Betty Evans."

"I helped fix that up," said a portly-looking lady. "There's a host of children there, and I found so many things that I thought would do them good. I had them laid out for the rummage sale, but I thought it was no use making poor people pay even a small price for things which might as well be given. I put in a dozen pairs of Johnny's pants, with pieces for patches. They didn't need much mending, but Johnny is such a proud little rascal, he won't wear a garment with a patch on it."

Betty's cheeks tingled. No one would imagine that her plain, timid face had anything but wonder behind it. But there were thoughts behind those big, wonder-filled eyes of Betty's, and they were real, serious ones. After the ladies had left the hall, she slipped out through the glittering snow toward home, and her thoughts ran fast and furious:

"I guess we don't need no old box with pants and patches in it! My brother won't wear pants with patches, neither; and we're proud, too! It ain't

money that makes people proud, and poor people has just as much right to be proud as rich ones, I'll let 'em know that! I'll just hurry home and meet 'em at the door myself, and tell 'em we've got plenty of clothes and eatables and everything, and they can take their old box to some poor folks! I hate bein' poor! I guess my mother's folks wasn't so poor, and that nice red dress I'm goin' to wear to-morrow night ain't one any one's give me; it's one mother had when she was a young lady, and the lace it's trimmed in is what she had on her wedding gown. I'm goin' home and set our nice plush album right in the window where them folks that brings the box can see it, and I'll tell 'em we don't need no box. If pa hadn't got his foot hurt we would 'a' had candy and presents and good things, and maybe we will, anyway. I'm goin' to tell them church folks so!"

As she carefully entered the door, and replaced the rags in the cracks to keep out the cold, her mother spoke eagerly:

"Betty, while you have on your wraps can't you go up to Mrs. Washburn's and get the money she owes me for sewing? I tried to get away, but your pa's foot has been paining him, and I'll have to go to the stores when you get back and get some things for Christmas, or the children will be disappointed. Tell her it's a dollar and a half. Run along, mother's little helper, and we'll see how many nice things a dollar and a half will buy."

"You'll get my doll, won't you, mother?" asked Mary, confidently.

"And me a horn—toot! toot!" said Bobby, using his hand as a horn in the meantime.

Betty counted it over on the way to Mrs. Washburn's. A quarter would buy that doll Mary wanted; a nickel for Bobby's horn, a quarter for something for herself,—for she knew mother would not leave her out,—a quarter for something for father; then a quarter for meat, and a quarter for candy and good things, and twenty cents left for—for mother, of course. But who would buy something for mother? Father had bought her a new pair of shoes last Christmas, but this Christmas father could not get her anything. She would go to the store herself then, and get something for mother, first of all. What would it be? A handkerchief, maybe, with lace on it, or a pretty collar. She could see what they had at the stores for a quarter. She hastened her steps as she entered Mrs. Washburn's yard. What if that horrid box should come while she was gone!

"Mrs. Washburn has gone away to spend Christmas," said the maid who opened the door.

"But the money—the money she owes mother for sewing?" faltered Betty.

"I don't know anything about that," said the maid; "and she left no word about it." Then, seeing Betty's disappointment, she took an orange from the table and handed it to her, saying: "I'm sorry. Merry Christmas to you."

"Merry Christmas," answered Betty, in a very doleful tone, as she turned away.

So there would be no doll for Mary, and no horn

for Bobby, and nothing for mother, or father. Betty stopped and looked around her. The lights from the windows gleamed out upon the white Christmas Eve; but on Betty's troubled little heart they cast no glow. They would not let her have the things at the stores without the money; there was no one she could ask for them, even if she would. No, there was no way under the bright, glittering stars to get a doll and a horn. And there would be no meat for the Christmas dinner. There was only bread and potatoes for dinner to-day, and there would be only bread and potatoes to-morrow. Not that Betty cared, but mother—mother would care so awfully! Betty raised her eyes to the sky, radiant with its Christmas lights; if there was no way under the stars there must be a way above them. "Oh, Lord!" prayed little Betty, "I don't know how you'll do it, but you can do everything just anyway, so please hurry, Lord, and send some way to get a doll and a horn, and something for father and mother, and—and some meat for Christmas dinner. And if I'm askin' too much, Lord, let the meat go, but let us have the other things, for mother's sake and Jesus' sake. Amen!"

Her heart glowed with faith and trust as she looked back to the earth, almost expecting to see the things she had asked for. But the snow still shone white and cold and motionless, and the lights in the windows spoke of joy and comfort only within the walls and closed doors. Suddenly her heart gave a startled throb. The box! There was the answer to her prayer! There might be something else be-

side pants and patches in that box,—a doll, a horn, or a story-book! Oh, what might there not be? And she had intended sending it away. No, no, she would not say it was not needed. The thought of mother and the little ones drove all the foolish pride from her heart, and she laughed aloud as she said: "And if that fat, stuck-up woman put in a dress made out of a overcoat, I'll wear it!"

But on reaching home she was again disappointed. No box had come, for none was in sight, and she would not mention it to mother lest it might not come at all. But mother did not seem as disappointed as Betty supposed she would when she learned that there was no money.

"She will cry when we are all asleep," thought Betty; and when the light was out, and the little ones slept, she stole softly to her mother's bed. "Mother, are you cryin'?" she asked.

"Crying? What for, darling?"

"Because there ain't nothing for Christmas," answered Betty. "I was 'fraid you was; I'm glad you ain't. Don't you, mother. 'Cause we all don't care."

Mother put her arms around the little comforter as she whispered:

"I'm not crying, because I'm trusting in the Good Father. Now run back to bed, Betty,—mother's little helper."

On Christmas morning the sunshine beamed into Betty's room from one side and mother's face from the other, as she said: "Merry Christmas, Betty, and Christmas gift!" and Betty sprang out of bed,

wondering if there could be a Christmas gift for some one. She hardly dared to think of it while she dressed, fearing she would hope and be disappointed. But a shout from the little ones, who had run out without stopping to dress, assured her, and she hastened to investigate.

There, in the middle of the room, stood the box, —a great, long one,—and Mary and Bobby were tumbling things out in great glee. Mary was wild over finding, not only one, but four dolls! Bobby had dug out a rubber ball, an elephant, and—oh, wonder!—a horn! "Surely the Lord fixed up that box after all," thought Betty, as she pounced upon a story-book. There were sacks of candy, nuts, apples, cakes, and ribbons, collars, handkerchiefs; piles of waists, and ties, and stockings,—things too numerous to mention, for mother, father, and all the children. And all night the precious box had reposed behind the lowered leaf of the table.

Presently Betty slipped back into her room, and, kneeling in the sunshine, prayed: "Oh, Lord, we are thankful for Christmas, and for the box, and for the sunshine, and father and mother and Mary and Bobby. Oh, Lord, we are thankful for everything, but most, for the good lady and the Christmas box!"

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT

CHRISTMAS

By permission of "School and Home Education," Bloomington, Ill.

OVER the hills of Palestine
The silver stars began to shine;
Night drew her shadows softly round
The slumb'ring earth, without a sound.

Among the dewy fields and rocks,
The shepherds kept their quiet flocks,
And looked along the dark'ning land
That waited the divine command.

When lo! through all the opening blue,
Far up the deep, dark heavens withdrew;
And angels in a radiant light
Praised God through all the list'ning night.

Again the sky was deep and dark;
Each star relumed his silver spark;
The dreaming land in silence lay
And waited for the dawning day.

But, in a stable low and rude,
Where white-horned, mild-eyed oxen stood,
The gates of heaven were still displayed
For Christ was in the manger laid.

SHAMMY'S CHRISTMAS TREE

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

"WE haven't Elder Hophni's opinion yet," said the minister, looking dubiously at the rugged, weather-beaten face opposite him and then around the tiny study upon the seamed, careworn countenances of Elders Penney, Sayre and Harkness. "We haven't Elder Preston's opinion as yet, but undoubtedly he will agree with us that we sanction the—the innovation."

The minister smiled, but by no means hopefully, and removing his spectacles, began polishing them with his handkerchief—a sure token with him of mental disturbance.

Elder Hophni Preston, who had been ominously silent all through the meeting, now raised his bullet head with a combative air which the meeting understood only too well.

"If it's a Christmas tree for the Sunday-school you're alludin' to, why not say so without beatin' about the bush? No, I don't favor no innovations into our church," he said decidedly—"Christmas tree in the house of worship and evergreen festoonin' on them sacred walls! I tell you, bretheren, you're on the wrong track. Leave such doin's to Papists and 'Piscopals that don't know no better. Fer my part, if sech counsels is to prevail, I shell resign my eldership and go jine the Bretheren. There's a growin' number of 'em over at Ashawagh, and they think's I do, fur as I can make out."

Silence—a dubious one—followed this lucid state-

ment. The clock ticked audibly, and somewhere up-stairs the minister's ninth baby cried—audibly too.

The minister looked ruefully at the ceiling and then at the clock, which now set up an asthmatic whirring, preparatory to striking ten. The session meeting had been long.

"I think," remarked the minister at length, with an effort at being both truthful and diplomatic, "I think there is some truth, my brethren, in the remarks of our excellent and invaluable brother. I myself feel that we must be extremely conservative in dealing with this matter, but my poor judgment is that we must progress a little or—or be left," concluded the minister rather lamely.

Assent was visible in every face but one, and Elder Harkness even nodded his silvery-white head in approval of these sentiments; but Elder Preston remained firm.

"It's late and I must be goin'," he said, standing a stern figure of reproof in the study door. "I tell ye, bretheren, I can't countenance it. You're all ag'in' me, as usual, but I must see my knee don't bow to Baal. I shan't hev no part nor lot into it, and Shamariah Stubbs Preston shan't go to no Christmas trees, nor Tishy neither. If they want entertainment let 'm sing hymns to hum—that's the way I was fetched up, and see where I be now."

Elder Hophni looked around once again for some sign of agreement, and finding none went out, banging two doors behind him.

Hophni was a just man, who intended to do his

full duty, and he treated his wife as well as he knew how. Tishy had all the butter money and no questions asked, even when her husband would have found it a great convenience. Twice a year in spite of the work that might be pressing he took her over to Filerville to see her folks.

If Hophni felt ill, which was seldom, he "worked it off," and if Tishy sometimes drooped her delicate head like a breaking lily, he recommended to her the same remedy.

Hophni, oddly enough, secretly worshiped his son, who had come after many childless years; but this affection he concealed from every one, even Tishy.

The mother little knew how the stern man's heart could melt in almost womanish tenderness over his one treasure. Hophni's caresses were lavished only when he was alone with his boy. Often after these yieldings Elder Preston would replace the child in his cradle and hasten to his chamber, where alone before God he would confess his weakness and pray for pardon. For in Hophni's mind natural affection was only a deadly snare for the soul—a weakness to be conquered at any cost lest it lead to idolatry.

So as the boy grew older the father's stolen caresses ceased, and all too soon the sound of his voice would check his child's infant glee.

"He don't care a snap for either of us," poor Tishy said bitterly to herself. "All he thinks of is his crops and his meetin's. If that's religion, I dunno's I want it."

"Why don't my pa ever buy me any playthings?"

asked Shammy one day of his mother. "All the other fellers has balls and games, and I ain't even got a jack-knife."

"Your pa thinks them things is wrong," said Tishy with a sigh. "He's afraid they'll lead you astray, Shammy."

"Pa's awful good, ain't he?" said Shammy, looking up under Tishy's slat sunbonnet with a pair of great wistful eyes.

"Yes," replied the mother, turning aside to brush away a tear. "Yes, Shammy, he is a good man. There isn't a better in all Jessups. He's a rulin' elder, and respected by everybody. He expects you to grow up and be just like him."

"I wish he wasn't quite so good," whimpered poor Shammy, thrusting his grimy, hard little fists into his empty pockets. "Johnny Clark's father swears awful, and he gives his little boy tops and kites and all sorts of things, and hugs him, too. I seen him myself."

"There, there, darlin', mother feels so bad to see you cry. Come in and I'll give you a piece of plum-cake and tell you how I used to help Uncle Fred trim the Christmas tree over in Filerville, and how Santa Claus used to come in jinglin' with bells and throw us all oranges and bags of candy. They say they're a goin' to have one here next winter for all the Sunday-school scholars. Won't that be nice?"

Shammy dried his tears at this. He asked innumerable questions about the tree—as yet only a distant dream—and between the delights of present

plum-cake and prospective Christmas festivities, forgot for a while his grievances.

"I guess you'd as well not speak about it before your pa," the mother said with a dim presentiment of trouble, and Shammy, alas! needed no second hint on that score.

* * * * * *

"They're determined to have their own disobedient way and have that Christmas tree," said the elder, looking at Tishy. "I told 'em none of my folks would ever have any such thing or see one long's I was around to hender. Shammy, what's the matter, sir?"

"My tea's too hot and burned my throat," said the boy, swallowing a big sob, while two tears ran down his freckled cheeks.

"Pour it into your saucer and blow it, then. Come, hurry up. Do you want the table to stand 'round all night for you?"

"I'm through," said Shammy, clenching his hands under the table and breathing hard.

"Oh, mother!" with a howl of actual agony as the door closed behind Hophni. "I can't bear it; I can't. Why won't my father ever let me do anything I want to?"

"There, there, Shammy! I declare you scare me. What makes you shake so? Why, you'll make mother cry too if you go on like this."

"I felt sure he'd never let me go," wailed the disappointed child. "I knew it all the while."

"There, darling, I hope you'll try and not go on

so before father. Come, go get the basket and pick up the eggs. Mebbe I can coax him yet. Come, hurry, or they'll all be froze solid. See how it's snowing already."

Shammy went, like the little soldier he was, though the tempest of passion was scarcely stilled. He found the big barn door shut and fastened against the rising storm, but the door of the cow-stables was banging noisily in the rising wind. Inside, the cows were rattling their empty meal-buckets as if wondering why at this late hour they were yet unfed.

"Where can he be?" thought Shammy. "I guess he's forgot to fodder. I'll jest go up in the mow and heave down some stalks to keep 'em still."

Shammy slid past the last cow in the row, and setting his basket on a barrel, began groping his way to the ladder.

Half way up the ladder, to his instant thrill of dismay, a voice sounded somewhere above him. Under the sloping eaves, it seemed, where the shadows lay deepest. Shammy clung to his perch, frozen momentarily into stone. It was indeed Hophni's voice—so much the child presently discovered—but not the voice his family knew. The father was wrestling alone in prayer before his God.

"Oh, Lord," pleaded the elder in tones so charged with anguish that Shammy's tears began flowing afresh, "help Thy poor, distressed servant to stand firm. Oh, how can I deny my child this thing he so desires? Oh, Thou knowest how in my sinful

heart I long to grant him all his unregenerate nature demands. Oh, help me to be firm and deliver me from idolatry. Help me to love only Thee.

"Oh, how can I ever hope for pardon when I love that boy better than my own soul? Lord, cut not off this child as a judgment upon me. I cannot help it. I cannot help it!"

The voice died away into inarticulate mutterings and then rose again in more piercing supplications; but Shammy heard no more. With a strange awe and terror upon him the child stole, a shadow among shadows, down the ladder and out into the white, eerie night. Amid all this confusion one thing stood out clear—his father really loved him after all.

Shammy had always felt a secret pride in his father. Hophni's immense strength, his known integrity, his honorable position in his little world, all filled his son's heart with admiration. And now his father really did care for him, Shammy felt almost—not quite, for he was only a little boy—that now he could renounce Christmas trees forever.

* * * * * *

The storm furled its gray banners and fled away before a brisk northwest wind; the winter sun shone and dazzled.

Sleigh-bells began jingling and merry laughter rang through the crisp December air. Only in Shammy's darkened room silence reigned and heart-sick foreboding. For the child was very ill—so ill that as the days went by his case seemed nearly hopeless.

Two nights before Christmas Hophni sat alone by the sick boy, while Tishy slept the heavy sleep of exhaustion in the old armchair by the kitchen fire.

"If I could only jest have peeked in at the door at it!" moaned Shammy. "If I could have jest seen it a minute! Oh, my throat—my throat! Father, I want some ice. Don't cry, please; I was only wishin' I could jest have peeked in. Would that have been wicked? I never seen a Christmas tree. Ma, tell my father not to pray so loud. I'll be a good boy if he'll only stop; but oh, a feller wants a pair of skates so bad and a sled. Oh, dear, won't it never be mornin'?"

When Tishy waked with a sudden leap of terror into full consciousness, she saw her husband drawing on his heavy boots.

"How's Shammy? How could you let me sleep so long? How is he?"

"Wuss," said Hophni, grimly. "Go in and take care of him. I'm goin' up inter the big woods."

"Goin' up into the big woods and your boy dyin'? Hophni Preston, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I be ashamed," groaned Hophni. "I more'n ashamed. I'm a lost, condemned sinner. I'm goin' inter them woods to cut a Christmas tree. Shammy shell have it if I go to eternal torment for it. No, Tishy, don't you lay a hand on me or it'll be all day with ye."

The sun was just rising when the elder came back dragging behind him a cedar-tree. Tishy, peeping

furtively beneath the window-shade, saw her husband harness the double team and without entering the house drive away on a wild gallop down the road to Sag Harbor. Somewhere about noon a steaming, panting pair of horses drew up before Mr. Minter's toy shop on Main Street.

"I want some stuff for a Christmas tree," demanded Hophni, crowding up to the counter. "I want candles and trimmin's and a sled and skates, and jack-knives and dominoes and checkers, and everything else a boy nine year old could use."

The saleswoman, a pretty girl with fluffy hair and a dimple in her cheek, looked her amazement out of her wide blue eyes.

"Come, hurry up!" cried Elder Hophni. "I kin pay cash, so don't be sca't. You put up the stuff and Mr. Minter'll make out the bill. Young woman, don't look at me as if I was crazy. I tell you Shammy's dyin' of diptheery, and if I don't hurry it'll be too late."

* * * * * *

"There," said the elder, drawing a deep breath, "I guess it's about ship-shape at last. Light the tapers, Tishy. I wonder if the sled shows plain from the bedroom door. I hope the skates will fit all right. Tishy, you'll hev to pull off my boot, I guess. I slashed me with the axe cuttin' the tree down, and I guess it's stuck on."

So saying, Elder Hophni fainted dead away beside the lighted Christmas tree.

When, ages later, he came whirling back, he

heard Doctor Pellet's voice far, far away. "No, the cut ain't so bad, Mis' Preston, though he'll be laid up a spell, I'm afraid. A wonder he didn't bleed to death, though."

"Shammy," whispered the elder through his white lips.

"Shammy's all right. You lay still! When we showed him the tree he was so tickled he give a screech. Here, drink this and stop your crying. I declare, Hoppy, I thought better of ye!"

* * * * * *

A fortnight later Elder Preston came limping in and sat down in his wonted place in the prayer-meeting. But while his brethren prayed and exhorted, Hophni sat silent and sorrowful.

"We haven't heard from Elder Preston yet," said the minister at length, after many appealing glances at Hophni had failed of effect. "Come, my brother, let us have your testimony."

Hophni rose with painful effort, steadying himself by the back of the seat before him.

"No testimony from me," he said, looking despairingly around. "I want to resign my eldership, for I ain't fit to guide no man."

Here the elder paused for breath, and wiped his damp forehead vigorously.

"It's all along of that Christmas tree," he went on at length. "I said I'd resign if you had it; I little thought what I'd do myself. And the worst of it is"—here Hophni looked about impressively—"I can't repent. My heart is as hard as Pharaoh's

—as unfeelin' as Elder Harkness's mill-stun. Why, when I try to repent and I recall how my boy Shamariah looked layin' there a gaspin' and a moanin' and a longin' for that Christmas tree, and when I think how—how pitiful he'd look up at me and how he'd put them little burnin' hands on my cheek and tell me not to—not to—cry"—here Hophni began to weep aloud—"when I think of them—them circumstances I'm—glad I done as I did. I know in my unfeelin', impenitent soul I should do it right over again. Yes, I'm glad I hung all them worldly trinkets onto it, and I wish I'd done it years before I did. Now turn me out, for I'm fell too deep for repentance."

Hophni fell back in his place and covered his face with his hands.

By and by the minister rose and said in a trembling voice: "Friends, let us give thanks to our Heavenly Father, who sent a little child to lead us all to Him, and especially let us praise Him for this friend whom He has so blessed with tenderness and humility, for of such, indeed, is the Kingdom of Heaven."

ELIZA EVANS CARTWRIGHT

THE DISCONTENTED FIR-TREE

A FIR-TREE stood, 'mid ice and snow,
As Christmas time drew near;
And, in its branches, sang a bird,
So loud that all could hear:

"Oh, wave your branches proudly now!
Be merry while you can;
For one of you shall be laid low
When comes the Christmas Man!

"When decked with balls and popcorn strings
And all aglow with light;
Your branches hung with pretty toys,—
You'll be a wondrous sight!

"But when the merriment has ceased,
And you are stripped and bare,
Admiring eyes will turn away,
And leave you standing there."

The fir-trees murmured, "Oh—oh—oh!
We do not want to go.
We'd rather keep our place amid
December's ice and snow."

But one, a foolish little tree,
Sighed to itself: "Oh, dear!
I know I'm very beautiful,
And no one sees me here.

"And if I cannot be admired,
What use to live at all?
Oh, let me have a glimpse of life!
Then I'm content to fall."

So when the ruthless Christmas Man
Came with his axe one day,
The little fir-tree thrilled with pride
To hear the children say:

"Oh, here is just the tree we want!"
And soon the axe began
Its yearly song of: "Come—come—be—
The vic-tim of—the Christ-mas Man!"

The people called it beautiful,
And sang and laughed in glee.
With things that glittered like the stars
They dressed the little tree.

But by and by a merry throng
Began to pull and tear!—
Almost before the tree could think,
It stood with branches bare!

In vain it sighed for just a glance
From those same girls and boys
Who said: "Here's just the tree we want,
On which to hang our toys!"

They didn't even shed a tear
When papa came next day,
And piled it on the rubbish heap
To wither and decay.

Ah! If the foolish tree had been
Contented with God's plan,
It might have graced the forest yet,
Safe from the Christmas Man.

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT

A POOR HOUSE CHRISTMAS

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

"God rest ye, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, your Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day."

SANG a little, bent old woman, and her voice, though still sweet, was tremulous with age or weakness.

There were several other women in the room, all old, and with the exception of one all were busy sewing or knitting.

The idler had drawn her chair close to the air-tight stove, and with discontent written in every line of her wrinkled face, was moodily watching the singer as she fashioned a rag doll from bits of cloth and cotton batting, her dissatisfaction becoming each moment more apparent.

"I declare, Mis' Barker, I don't see how you c'n feel like singin'," she exclaimed at length.

Mrs. Barker turned toward her a surprised face, as she replied, "Why, Sister Lane, to-morrow will be Christ's birthday."

The other smiled grimly. "Yes, an' you an' I are goin' to keep it in the 'Poor House!'"

Mrs. Barker cast a troubled glance at the speaker and then her eyes wandered around the bare, clean room, which had no superfluous furniture to hide its angles. Finally her face cleared as she said, gently, "There are worse places in the world, and He had 'not where to lay His head.'"

Presently Mrs. Lane lifted a breadth of the "all wool delaine" from which the doll dresses were being fashioned.

"That's real pretty stuff," she said, as she scrutinized the fabric.

"Yes, I think so," and Mrs. Barker smoothed the bit she held in her hand and looked dreamily at its creamy whiteness, dotted with tiny bunches of blue violets, as she added: "I had this dress the year arfter I was married. Pa bought it 'cause he said them vi'lets were jest the color o' my eyes," and a faint blush stole into the soft old cheeks. "Sammy liked it, too, an' long ago as he was a little feller, jest learnin' to talk, he'd say, 'Pitty, pitty!' an' clap his hands ev'ry time I put it on. When he got bigger he called it my 'flower dress,' an' liked to hev me wear it after he was a great big boy. I've allus been real ch'ice of it, but it wore out at last, an' I've kept the pieces all these years for pa's an' Sammy's sakes. I d' know but I've been makin' kind of an idol of 'em, an' I guess I'm doin' the right thing now passin' 'em along to make some one else happy. I know it's what pa an' Sammy'd want me to do, for they was both master fond of childun."

Mrs. Lane watched her a few moments in silence, and then said, interrogatively: "How long is't sence your husband died?"

"Goin' on nineteen years," was the reply.

"I s'pose Sammy's dead, too?"

"Yes," and a spasm of pain passed over the gentle old face. "Sammy went fust, an' 'twas that killed his pa." Then, seeing the interest in her lis-

tener's face, she continued: "The year afore he died, Sammy, who was jest turned eighteen, took it into his head to go West an' see his Uncle Jim. Jim was my brother, an' lived on a big farm—a ranch, he called it—an' nothin' to do but Sammy must visit him. I hated to hev him go the wust way, but pa kind o' favored it, so I gin in. He got there all right, an' writ home what a good time he was hevin' an' then the next news we had, there'd been an Injun raid, an' he an' his Uncle Jim was both killed. I lived through it, though I thought then my heart was broke, an' as for pa, he couldn't be reconciled to it, but jest pined an' pined for Sammy till he died a few months arfter. With pa an' Sammy both gone, I couldn't bear to stay in the old place, so I sold out an' come out here to Iowy. I planned to live with Cousin John Forbes an' his wife, but before I'd been here a month both died, an' then the bank that had my money bu'st up, an' I had to work hard to keep soul an' body together. I thought then 'twas pretty hard, but I see now 'twas the best thing that could happen, for it kind o' took me out o' myself, an' I found I wa'n't the only one in the world with trials. I got along real well till a year ago, when this rheumatiz come on me, an' I had to give up an' come here, where it looks as if I sh'll hev to stay the rest o' my nat'ral life. But Mis' Mahew's a real good woman, an' Mr. Mahew treats us well, so I've no cause to complain, an' 'twon't be for long, anyway."

Christmas morning dawned clear, crisp and cold. Mr. Mahew came home at noon, full of excitement.

The Governor was in town, and was coming to inspect the "Farm" that afternoon.

There was some bill relating to paupers before the Legislature, and before signing it he determined to see for himself how they were treated.

Mr. Mahew put up his horse and went through the barns and outbuildings, to make sure they were in order, while Mrs. Mahew made a tour of the house and congratulated herself upon the fact that everything was as "neat as a pin."

They went through the barns first, and then entering the house were duly presented to Mrs. Mahew, who undertook to pilot them through her domain.

"Very good! Very praiseworthy, my dear madam," murmured the Senator from the district who accompanied the party; and the others echoed his praises.

But the Governor was silent, and looking at him for some sign of approval, Mrs. Mahew saw that he was staring at the tree, with eyes that saw nothing else, while his face worked strangely, and half unconsciously his hand stroked the dress of the nearest doll.

"Where did you get this?" he asked at length in a hushed voice as he pointed to the doll's dress.

"One of the women made it from an old dress of her own," replied Mrs. Mahew, wondering what it all meant.

"Can I see her?"

"Why, certainly; but she's pretty bad with rheumatism, and I'm afraid you'll have to go to her."

The Governor nodded, and still holding the doll

in his hand, followed her through a long corridor to the general sitting-room, where the inmates were all assembled.

There was a flutter of skirts as he entered, and each one dropped her best courtesy; but with a grave bow, which included all, he passed them without a word and made his way to the farther end of the room where Mrs. Barker was seated.

The others pressed a little nearer, but Mrs. Mahew, although herself burning with curiosity, motioned them back as she said: "Mrs. Barker, his excellency, the Governor, would like to speak with you."

"Don't rise, madam."

It was the Governor's deep voice that said this, and the old woman who had tried to stand, fell back with a stifled moan of pain, while she looked curiously at the bearded face above her.

"I am told you made this dress."

The Governor's voice was husky now, and had dropped almost to a whisper, as he pointed to the gay flowered gown of the doll in his hand.

"I did."

"May I ask where you obtained the material?"

"My husband bought it for me a good many years ago, when I was a young woman," she said with a sigh, "and I've kept it because he liked it; an' Sammy—that was my boy—thought so much of it."

"And always liked to see his mother in her pretty 'flower-gown,'" cried the Governor, the tears chasing each other down his cheeks.

"Oh, mother! mother! mother!" and now he was on his knees, with his head in her lap.

She looked piteously from one to another of the group about her.

"What does he mean?" she asked. "Sammy's dead! There's no one to call me mother!"

The Governor lifted his head and drew her face down so that he could look into her eyes. "Mother, don't you know Sammy?" he said earnestly.

She shook her head. "Sammy's dead!" she reiterated.

"No; no, dear," he cried. "It was all a mistake. Uncle Jim was killed, but I am alive to love and care for you the rest of your life."

There was much to explain, and when they were calmer, she learned that he had been captured by the Indians, who had treated him kindly, and after three years given him his freedom.

His first thought then had been for his father and mother, and he learned that his father was dead, and his mother gone, no one knew where. In vain he advertised, and after years of searching for her, had come to the conclusion that she, too, was dead.

But the long years of loneliness and poverty were over for her now, and they would never be parted again.

"You are going home with me," he said. "I shall take you as my best Christmas present to my wife and babies."

LIZZIE M. HADLEY

STAR OF THE EAST

By permission of "School and Home Education," Bloomington, Ill.

BEAUTIFUL Star, that dawned in the Orient,
Shedding thy light on the desert's lone way,
Led by thy brightness, we, too, would come bringing
Our gifts, magi-like, in the manger to lay.
Gladly we offer our choicest of treasures,
Seeking, with these, our allegiance to prove;
But our gems and our myrrh, our gold and frankincense,
Are offered in vain if not offered in love.

Beautiful Star, that with mystical arrow
Told where a King was enthroned in a stall,—
Oh, fair are the orbs shining nightly above us,
But Thou, in Thy splendor, excellest them all.
Shine on in the darkness, bright herald of morning;
Shine on down the ages with lustre undimmed,
Still leading the way to the sweet Son of Mary,
Till through the wide world hallelujahs are hymned.

MARY B. SLEIGHT

THE GIFT OF THE KIND HEART

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

IN the long ago there lived in a village a little girl by the name of Huldah. Her father was a poor day-laborer, who had to depend on yesterday's work

for to-day's food. One day the father came home ill, then Want came in and sat down by the sick man's bedside. The mother did all she could do to drive Want away; but, if she forced him out at the door, he came in at the window. At last the mother, too, fell ill, and then Despair took his seat by the side of Want.

Want and Despair, these were strong foes for a weak girl to fight, but Huldah had courage and love, powerful weapons, even in a child's hands; and, for a time, she managed to secure food and other actual necessities for her parents, though she herself often went hungry. But, at length, there came a morning when there was not a mouthful of food in the house; and, for the first time, Despair crept near to little Huldah. She thought not of herself, though she had not tasted food for nearly twenty-four hours; she only thought of her sick father and mother. She knew that they must have food soon or perish.

It was a cold wintry day, the day before Christmas, but Huldah wrapped her mother's tattered shawl around her head and shoulders; and, after kissing her father and mother good-bye, telling them she would bring a bowl of warm broth back with her, she went out to try to earn a few pennies with which to purchase food. The wind blew through the holes in her shawl and thin clothing, and drove the snow with blinding force against her face. All day long, through the cold and the storm, she wandered from house to house, growing colder and weaker as the day grew older; yet finding no work.

Night came and compelled her to turn her steps homeward, still empty-handed. She was so weary from the toils of the day, so weak from the lack of food, and so numb with the cold, that she could hardly place one foot in front of the other, and staggered along through the snow like a drunken man.

Suddenly, from out the darkness and snow to the front of her, rushed a giant form, clothed in a great fur coat. Huldah gave a little frightened cry, jumped to one side, slipped on a stone, and fell almost under the feet of the hurrying man.

"Heigh, ho! What have we here?" and a strong hand quickly caught the fallen girl and set her on her feet. "A mite of a lassie! And alone in the cold and the storm!" The blue eyes looked searchingly into Huldah's face, while the great bear-skin gloves on the hands gently brushed the snow off the tattered shawl and thin clothes.

Evidently the man was in a great hurry, but he stopped long enough to pull off one of the gloves, thrust his hand into his pocket, and place a silver coin in the girl's hand. Then with a loud "Good-bye, little one," he rushed on, and vanished in the darkness and falling snow.

Huldah stared at the coin in her hand, her pale face flushed—she had never accepted charity, and she started after the vanishing man. But before she had taken five steps he had gone from her sight. She could not return the money. It was hers. Again her face flushed and her eyes sparkled, and she ran as fast as her weary feet could carry her to a

small bakery, which was but three rods from her own home. After all, the father and mother would have the warm broth!

The baker took the money, looked at Huldah, and then poured into a large bowl a double portion of broth. He had a little girl of his own.

Huldah gripped the bowl in both hands and hurried away. How delicious the broth smelled! How comfortable the warm sides of the bowl felt to her cold hands! She was quite sure the hot broth would make her father and mother well again ——

"Oh!"

The bowl of precious broth nearly fell from Huldah's hands in her fright. Right down in front of her a poor man had fallen, headlong, and lay on the ground moaning. He was very old. A few thin locks of white hair hung from under his worn fur cap, and his white wrinkled face was drawn and quivering with pain. His clothes were old and ragged. He had no shoes, but around his feet were tied bags of sheepskin.

"For the love of heaven, give me food and fire!" called the old man.

The cry went straight to Huldah's heart. She stopped and approached him timidly, until she saw the pitiful condition he was in, then her compassion drove out all her fear.

He was so weak he could only lift his thin wrinkled hands toward Huldah, and repeat: "For the love of heaven, give me food and fire!" His pinched face and sunken eyes told her that he was starving. She was wise enough to know that the

hunger and cold would soon kill, unless food and fire drove them away. She had the food in her hands, and there was fire in her home. But her father and mother! Alas, they, too, were hungry! Yet the need of the old man was even greater than their need. She held his life in the bowl in her hand, and he so old and helpless!

There were tears in Huldah's eyes, as she knelt by the side of the old man and gave him the broth. He ate it greedily; ate until every drop was gone.

"Now for the fire!" she said, cheerily, and helped him to his feet.

The warm broth had given him new vigor, yet he leaned so heavily on Huldah that the little strength remaining into her was taxed to its uttermost; but, at last, her hand was on the latch to the door of her humble home, and she led him in.

"He was starving, father, and I gave him the bowl of broth. He was freezing, mother, and I brought him to our fire."

The sick father and mother smiled. "Thank God for giving our daughter the gift of the kind heart," they said. "Brighten up the fire, and make comfortable the old man. God will take care of us."

Huldah heaped wood on the glowing coals, and soon the fire was blazing merrily. She made the old man as comfortable as possible, and then, going to her mother, she lay down wearily by her side and, throwing her arms around her neck, murmured, "Mother, mother, I am so tired and hungry!"

The mother kissed her. "Let us pray, my

daughter, for the old man, who hath so much more need of the kind God's succor than we."

When the prayer was finished the old man arose slowly to his feet. Huldah watched him with wondering eyes. His form swelled into the fulness of health. He shook the rags from off him, and stood in the bright firelight a towering giant in a great fur coat. Huldah at once recognized the man she had met in the storm and who had given her the silver coin. The blue eyes looked into her face; and, as they looked, the countenance became radiant, the great fur coat changed into a robe of the purest whiteness, and a light filled the room of so dazzling a brightness that all were compelled to close their eyes.

When they opened their eyes again the glorious form had vanished.

Then the parents knew that an angel had visited their humble home.

On the spot where the old man had reposed stood the two bags of sheepskin, which he had wrapped around his feet. Huldah approached reverently, and attempted to lift them. The bags broke open, and a stream of gold coins fell on the floor.

"God is good. Thank God for giving our little daughter the gift of the kind heart," softly prayed the awed father and mother.

Then Want and Despair went out of the door and never came back for Joy and Peace came in with the Christmas Day.

EVERETT MCNEIL

CHRISTMAS AND THE OLD YEAR

RING softly, bells, your message sweet;
Oh, winter winds, breathe low your song;
For Christmas casts her gems away,
With farewell kisses, to the throng.

Adown the snowy path she comes,
And takes the Old Year's trembling hand;
And swift and light the snowflakes weave
A veil around them, as they stand.

His robe is stiff with frozen sleet;
His locks to shreds of white are cast
By rushing wind, as on he goes
To drift into the misty Past.

Oh, trees, bend low! a crown is dropped,
The gift our old friend leaves the new —
Stern Father Time holds wide the gate,
And Christmas leads the Old Year through.

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT.

A WORD TO SANTA CLAUS

By permission of "School and Home Education," Bloomington, Ill.

DEAR Santa, lean your ear this way;
I want you to remember
A boy who lives next door to me,
When you come this December.

He's always good when he's in school,
And always kind at play,
And when he's out of school, he helps
His mother, every day.

His father died a year ago,
And they are very poor;
Last Christmas, when I showed my gifts,
(I had a score, or more),

I said: "Now show your gifts to me,
Your books and all your toys;"
He said: "Oh, Santa Claus is not
Acquainted with poor boys."

So I would like to introduce
My friend, across the way,
And will you not remember him
When you come Christmas Day?

And if you have not toys enough,
Then why not pass the door
Of all of us who have so much,
And give some to the poor?

JOEY'S CHRISTMAS

JOEY was an orphan; and alas! a cripple from birth. At the death of his mother, following three months after that of his father, Joey had been taken to the home of his Aunt Matt, who had, in

her way, been very good to him. But with nine children of her own, and not as many dollars per week coming in, she found it difficult to keep her own fed and clothed, and properly patched, without caring for an extra; so Joey was sent to the Home. But the Home rules were rigid, and Joey was a free-born, independent little body, so he slipped away, and on this gloomy, wet day, stood in front of a bakery window, wishing he were a man—wishing he were back at Aunt Matt's, eating with the nine noisy, do-as-you-please children, who had each other for company—wishing it would quit raining—wishing everything; and as no wish came true, or seemed likely to come true for a long time, Joey was in damp spirits—in a damp state generally. His feet went sqush, sqush, in his wet shoes whenever he took a step. Even the pockets into which he thrust his little bare hands were damp.

It had rained almost steadily for a week—not a very pleasant outlook for Christmas, surely. For that matter, Christmas hadn't a very pleasant outlook to Joey, anyway. Who was there to give Christmas gifts to him, or for him to give Christmas gifts to? He might buy some for the nine cousins; but no, that was too many, and it would cost something to send them. And Joey had only ninety-five cents, and must save that until he could earn more.

A lady passed, leading a boy dressed in brown velvet. Her arms were full of parcels—gifts for the boy in brown velvet, Joey supposed. The boy had some parcels, too. Perhaps they were for his mother

and father, or—perhaps for a dear little sister! Joey wished he had a little sister. He would buy her—yes, he would buy her that great big doll in the window opposite. And if he had a mother, he would buy her that pretty blue hat with a bird on it! How must it feel to have a mother and a sister, he wondered.

Just then a big, burly, half-drunken fellow came along, and, as Joey turned to move away, the drunken man grabbed him and threw him on the pavement.

"What you doin', you little water-rat? Don't you know enough to go in when it rains? What's your name? Now don't give me none of your sass!"

Poor, frightened Joey began to cry, for which he was receiving a severe cuffing, when a policeman came upon the scene. Underneath his coat of blue and austere bearing, the policeman bore a heart that a boy might know and love, and Joey knew the benefactor's heart and loved him, as his gruff voice cried:

"Hold, there! Now clear out of this in a hurry, or there'll be trouble!" and then turned and lifted little miserable, tearful Joey out of the wet, and asked;—oh, in such a different voice from that used to the ruffian: "Why don't you go home, child?" And the tears flowed afresh as Joey sobbed: "I ain't got—no—home!"

"Where do you sleep?" asked the policeman.

"In there," pointing to an open stairway that led up—no one could tell where.

"Do you have anything to eat?" continued the questioner.

"I've got ninety-five cents," answered Joey, "but I'm keepin' that for a Christmas dinner to-morrow. I got it cleanin' walks. I'm goin' to clean some more when some more mud gets on 'em."

"Where will you get your Christmas dinner?"

"At Swan's. But it costs a lot, and that's why I'm keepin' it all. Oh, there'll be turkey, an' cranberries, an' dressin', an' pie, an' cake, an' puddin', an' ice-cream, an' everything! Black Tom said so. Black Tom's dinner don't cost him anything every day, because he works there. My! I wish I'd hurry an' get big enough to work there, and have such dinners every day!"

The policeman looked down at the mite of a boy, and thought—if Joey didn't get something to eat, he never would be much bigger.

It was near supper time, and he patted Joey's head, and said: "Good-bye; better run to your stairway, and not stay out in the wet."

Arriving home, Officer McConnell found the young McConnells in a state of high glee. The tree was being prepared in the parlor by Mrs. McConnell and Nora. Little Mary could do nothing but squeal. Johnny had to be pulled away from the keyhole over and over. As Officer McConnell watched his little son jumping around the room, slapping his thighs and crying: "There's a hobby horse, and a drum, and a rabbit, and a great big doll! I seen 'em! I seen 'em!" and rolling over the floor in ecstasy, he thought of a little lone, dripping lad,

curled in a dark stairway, clasping his only savings, for a lonely Christmas dinner.

"Johnny, come here!" said Officer McConnell. Johnny ran and jumped upon his father's knee, hugging him tightly. After a few minutes he jumped down and ran to get his cap and coat. Officer McConnell lifted him in his arms, and together they went out into the night. Myriads of lights twinkled the gloom away, and Johnny beat time on his father's back to the tune he whistled as he walked rapidly to the stairway the waif had pointed out to him.

"Hello, kid!" called Officer McConnell, when they had reached the place.

"Hullo, kid!" echoed Johnny.

"Who are you?" came from within.

"Come out and see," answered the policeman. "I've brought my boy along, and he wants to talk to you."

Joey crept out, wondering; raised his wan face to the pair, and then said: "Oh, it's you!" while a look of relief and gladness came into his eyes.

"And this is my boy, Johnny. Now tell us your name."

"Joey Ward," answered the waif.

"And we want you to come to our house right now and see our Christmas tree!" cried Johnny, who could wait no longer to deliver his message.

"I'm too wet," answered Joey.

"Well, I guess you can get dry," laughed the officer, and he lifted the child in his strong arm and started on the run. Johnny laughed gleefully, but

poor little Joey was not yet awake to the facts of the case, and was so wet and cold that he only smiled at Johnny's glee.

When they reached the warm room where the little McConnells were playing, and Johnny had taken off his heavy coat, Joey recognized him—the boy in brown velvet !—whom he had seen that day.

First, a suit of Johnny's warm, dry clothes were put on the waif, by Officer McConnell's great, loving hands, and when the warmth, and light and cheer had done its work, Joey laughed aloud at Johnny's antics, and was soon dancing around the room with the others. When, at last, he was tucked away in a warm, soft bed, he heaved sigh after sigh of contentment, and thankfulness, and anticipation. He knew now that the angels he had seen in the pictures were Mrs. McConnell, Nora, and Grace, and sweet little Mary,—and Officer McConnell and Johnny, too, if there were men angels.

But on Christmas morning, amid the flurry and skurry of getting ready for the tree, Joey was missed. No one had noticed his going. Mrs. McConnell and Nora had been too busy. Johnny had been occupied in running to the keyhole, and Grace had been occupied in pulling him back. Officer McConnell advised that they wait a minute, and, just as Mrs. McConnell was saying that they couldn't wait any longer, as she really could not hold the children back, Joey came in, his face full of excitement, and running over to Mrs. McConnell, held out a package. Mrs. McConnell's hands were full, trying to hold the eager Johnny and Mary, who made threat-

ening lunges toward the door. So Nora took the package, and deposited its contents with the other things, and the doors were opened. Then such a jumping and tumbling, and squealing and shouting, and hugging and pinching!—as the presents were distributed, Joey's among the rest. And all the while the burning tapers gleamed their Christmas Greeting, and the joy bells jingled in the generous hearts of the gazers. And when Officer McConnell drew Joey (with his arms full of presents) to him, and told him that his Christmas gift to him was a home among kind people he knew, and not far from the McConnells', the little Christ-child image at the top of the tree actually smiled right down into Joey's eyes!

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT

THE QUEST OF THE MAGI

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

OUT of the East the Magi came
In quest of the long Foretold;
Three kings were they of royal fame
In the wondrous days of old;
Afar they came from the morning-tide,
Through valley and meadow sweet,
And sandy wastes of the desert wide
Were tracked by their camels' feet.

Through drowsy heats of the burning noon,
Through lonely and desolate lands,

Where the wayside palm-trees droop and swoon
In the hot and burning sands;
In starlit camp of the journey long
The dreams of their sleep outran,
The slow-paced march of the motley throng
In the trail of the caravan.

Weary and slow they traveled far,
Out of the land of the morn,
Led on alway by the guiding-star
In quest of the King new-born;
Till over the Syrian hills at night
Where the dreaming shepherds lay,
The windows of heaven aglow with light
Made clear the gloom of the way.

And through the streets of the white-walled town
They sought Him on royal throne;
While the starlight sifted softly down
In the court of a stable lone!
Through city and street, the desert past,
Full weary and slow they filed,
Till the King they sought was found at last
In Bethlehem's wondrous Child.

They brought Him gifts of the costliest things—
Sweet myrrh and many a gem—
The homage of hearts and treasure of kings,
To the manger of Bethlehem;
Then back they turned to the morning land
And with joyful feet they trod
The waste of the desert's burning sand
With faith in the Christ of God!

This was the quest of the sages old;
Now the Christmas bells renew
The sweetest story that time has told
The sweep of the ages through;
So carol, O heart, with chime of bells,
And open thy lips and sing,
While the joy of Earth its rapture tells
To the world's Redeemer-King.

BENJ. F. LEGGETT

POLLY'S DISCOVERY

By permission of "The Delineator," New York

THINGS are not like they used to be
When I was very small,
And some things 'bout old Santa Claus
I do not see at all!

There used to be just only one,
Who came the night before
And climbed right down our chimney place,
And filled our stockings four.

But now—oh, my! I saw to-day
Six standing 'round in town,
And one was dressed in red and white
And two in pink and brown!

One wore a pointy white fur cap
And held a plate for money

Which said "To feed the Christmas poor."
He looked most gay and funny!

And one who stood in my toy store
Shook hands with me so kind,
And hoped I'd find a Christmas tree
Just suited to my mind!

And once I spied a real Saint Nick,
Who gave me quick a wink
And popped right down his chimney big
Before I'd time to think.

And at our Sunday-school last night
The gifts from off the tree
Were passed by still another one,
As jolly as could be.

And Christmas Day is not here yet;
It's some days off, you know,
And yet the town is full of these
Kriss Kringles in the snow!

I must begin to think I think
That all folks—even I—
Could be a kind of Santa Claus
If I should only try.

What fun it is to find it out!
What fun to try this year
To help Kriss Kringle pass around
His stock of Christmas cheer!

I'm glad the world is full of us!
I'm glad to know that we,
Big folks and little children, too,
Like Santa Claus can be!

CHARLOTTE BREWSTER JORDAN

THE MORLEYS' CHRISTMAS EVE

By permission of Fords, Howard & Hulbert, New York

AN attic room, neat and clean, but poorly furnished; a bed and a trundle bed, a small cooking-stove, a shelf with a few dishes, one or two chairs and stools, a pale, thin woman working on a vest.

Her face is anxious; her thin hands tremble with weakness, and now and then, as she works, quiet tears drop, which she wipes quickly.

This is John Morley's wife. This morning he has risen and gone out in a desperate mood. "No use to try," he says. "Didn't I go a whole year and never touch a drop? And now just because I fell once I'm kicked out! When a fellow once trips, everybody gives him a kick. Talk about love of Christ! Who believes it? Your Christians hit a fellow that's down as hard as anybody. It's everybody for himself, and devil take the hindmost. Well, I'll trudge up to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and see if they'll take me on there.—If they don't I may as well go to the sea, or to the devil!"

"Mamma!" says a little voice, "what are we going to have for our Christmas?"

It is a little girl, with soft curly hair and bright, earnest eyes that speaks.

A sturdy little fellow of four presses up to the mother's knee and repeats the question. "Shan't we have a Christmas, mother?"

The poor woman is overcome; she leans forward and breaks into sobbing,—a tempest of sorrow, long suppressed, that shakes her weak frame as she thinks that her husband is out of work, desperate, discouraged, and tempted, that the rent is falling due, and only the poor pay of her needle to meet it with. In those quick flashes which concentrate through the imagination the sorrows of years, she sees her little home broken up, her husband in the gutter, her children in the street. She clasps her hands and cries out in despair, "Oh, my God, help me."

There was no sound of any voice that answered; there was no sound of footfall on the staircase; yet that agonized cry had reached the heart it was intended for. The Shining Ones were with her; they brought her a Christmas gift from Christ—the gift of trust. She knew not from whence came the courage and rest that entered her soul; but while her little ones stood wondering and silent, she turned to her well-worn Bible. Hands that she did not see guided her as she turned the pages, and pointed the words: "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in His sight."

She wiped away her tears, kissed her children and smiled upon them. Then she gathered up her finished work, and attired herself to go forth and carry it back to the shop.

"Mother," asked the children, "they are dressing the church, and the gates are open, and people are going in and out; mayn't we play there by the church?"

The mother looked out on the ivy-grown walls of the church, with its flocks of twittering sparrows, and said:

"Yes, my little birds; you may play there if you will be very good and quiet."

The little ones went gayly into the yard. They had been frightened by their mother's tears; but she had smiled again, and that had made all right with them.

The old sexton came to the side door and threw out an armful of refuse greens, and then stopped a moment and nodded kindly at them.

"May we play with them, please, sir?" said little Elsie, looking up with great reverence.

"Oh, yes, to be sure; these are done with—they are no good now."

"Oh, Tottie!" cried Elsie, rapturously, "just think, he says we may play with all these! Why, here's ever and ever so much green, enough to play house. Let's play build a house for father and mother."

"I'm going to build a house for 'em when I grow up," said Tottie, "and I mean to have glass bead windows in it."

Tottie had once had presented to him a box of glass beads to string, and he could think of nothing finer in the future than unlimited glass beads.

Meanwhile his sister began planting pine branches upright in the snow to make her house.

"You see, we can make believe there are windows and doors and a roof and it's just as good," said she. "Now let's make believe there is a bed in this corner, and we will lie down to sleep."

And Tottie obediently couched himself in the allotted corner and shut his eyes very hard, though after a moment he remarked that the snow got into his neck.

"You must play it isn't snow—play it's feathers," said Elsie.

"But I don't like it," persisted Tottie, "it don't feel a bit like feathers."

"Oh, well, then," said Elsie, accommodating herself to the circumstances, "let's play get up now and I'll get breakfast."

Just then the door opened again, and the sexton began sweeping refuse out of the church. There were bits of ivy and holly, and ruffles of ground-pine, and lots of bright red berries that came flying forth into the yard, and the children screamed for joy. "Oh, Tottie!" "Oh, Elsie!" "Only see how many pretty things—lots and lots!"

The sexton laughed as he saw the little ones so eager for the scraps and remnants.

"Don't you want to come in and see the church?" he asked. "You may come in."

They tipped in softly, with wondering eyes. The

light through the stained glass windows fell blue and crimson and yellow on the pillars all ruffled with ground-pine and brightened with scarlet berries, and there were stars and crosses and mottoes in green all through the bowery aisles, while the organist, hid in a thicket of verdure, was practicing softly, and sweet voices sung: "Hark! the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King."

"Hush, Tottie!" said Elsie when he broke into an eager exclamation, "don't make a noise. I do believe it's something like heaven," she added, under her breath.

They made the course of the church and came round by the door again where the sexton stood smiling upon them.

"You can find lots of pretty Christmas greens out there," he said, pointing to the door; "perhaps your folks would like to have some."

"Oh, thank you, sir," exclaimed Elsie, rapturously. "Oh, Tottie, only think! Let's gather a good lot and go home and dress our room for Christmas. Oh, won't mother be astonished when she comes home, we'll make it so pretty!"

And forthwith they began gathering into their little aprons wreaths of ground-pine, sprigs of holly, and twigs of crimson bitter-sweet. The sexton, seeing their zeal, brought out to them a little cross, fancifully made of red alder-berries and pine.

Soon the little gleaners were toddling off out of the yard—moving masses of green.

They had a merry time dressing the room. They stuck big bushes of pine in each window; they put

a little ruffle of ground-pine around mother's Bible, and they fastened the beautiful red cross up over the table, and stuck sprigs of pine or holly into every crack that could be made, by fair means or foul, to accept it, and were immensely satisfied and delighted. Tottie insisted upon hanging up his string of many-colored beads in the window to imitate the effect of the stained glass of the great church window.

"It looks pretty when the light comes through," he said.

When everything had been stuck somewhere, Elsie swept the floor, and made up a fire, and put on the teakettle, to have everything ready to strike mother favorably on her return.

And, indeed, when mother opened the door of her little room, she drew back astonished at the sight that presented itself. A brisk fire was roaring in the stove, and the teakettle was sputtering and sending out clouds of steam. A table with a white cloth on it was drawn out before the fire, and a new tea-set of pure white cups and saucers, with teapot, sugar-bowl, and creamer, complete, gave a festive air to the whole. There were bread, and butter, and ham-sandwiches, and a Christmas cake all frosted, with little blue and red and green candles round it ready to be lighted, and a bunch of hot-house flowers in a pretty little vase in the centre. A new stuffed rocking-chair stood on one side of the stove, and there sat Miss Florence DeWitt, the daughter of the man who had turned John Morley off, and who had come to tell them that she had coaxed her father

into trying the gardener once more, bringing the beautiful Christmas things with her. She sat holding little Elsie in her lap, and both children were dressed from head to foot in complete new suits of clothes, and Elsie was holding with tender devotion a fine doll, while Tottie rejoiced in a horse and cart.

And now she said to Mrs. Morley :

"I'm so sorry John lost his place at father's. He was kind and obliging, and I always liked him ; and if you can get him to sign the pledge never to drink another drop, papa will take him back. I always get papa to do what I want, and the fact is, he hasn't got any one who suited him as well as John since he discharged him. Tell him I trust him." And she pulled out a paper wherein she had written out again the temperance pledge, and dated it "Christmas Eve, 1875."

"Now, you come with John to-morrow morning, and bring this with his name to it, and you'll see what I'll do!" and with a kiss to the children, the little good fairy departed, leaving the family to their Christmas Eve.

What that Christmas Eve was, when the husband and father came home, only the family and the Shining Ones who watched them can say. There were joyful tears and solemn prayers, and earnest prayers in the little room.

"And the angels echoed around the throne,
Rejoice ! for the Lord brings back His own."

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

THE CHRISTMAS LIGHT

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

ALONG the slopes of an ancient hill,
Lo, we are shepherds and watchers, still.
Behold the flocks of our shepherd-care:
The faith we hold and the love we bear.

Lo, we are shepherds, the same as they
Who kept the Christmas of yesterday,
Who rose at even and followed far
The golden path of a princely star.

Beside old memories watching here
This holy night of the passing year,
Across the vale and along the hill
The Light of Christmas is with us still.

And we are glad of the sacred sign
As were the shepherds of ancient line.
We rise to follow—what less might we
Than they, the watchers across the sea?

We rise to follow—and home we fare,
Our gifts of incense and myrrh to bear,
And lay them down, with the rest, beside
The blessed Child of the Christmas-tide.

For 'neath the roofs of the homeland far,
We still keep faith with the Christmas Star;
And Love is Master, and Love is all
To-night wherever its rays shall fall.

FRANK WALCOTT HUTT

LITTLE WOLF'S WOODEN SHOES

By permission of "School and Home Education," Bloomington, Ill.

LONG ago, in a village in the north of Europe, there lived a little seven year old boy named Wolf. Wolf was an orphan, and was now in charge of an old aunt, who was unkind and avaricious. But the little fellow was so amiable that he loved her, although he feared her.

As the aunt was known to be wealthy, she was ashamed to send her nephew to a charity school, but paid a reduced tuition. The master, vexed at having a pupil so poorly clad, and who paid so little, punished him frequently and unjustly, and even set his comrades, who were all sons of prominent citizens, against him, and made of the little orphan a scapegoat.

Christmas approached. The evening before the great day, the master of the school always took his pupils to church, and then back to their homes. The children came to the rendezvous warmly clad in greatcoats, with fur capes covering their ears, gloves and woolen mittens, while little Wolf alone presented himself shivering in his every-day clothes, and having on his feet heavy wooden shoes. His companions made open sport of his sad face and poor attire, but the orphan blew upon his fingers to keep them warm and took no notice of his tormentors. And the children, marching two and two, started for the parish church. Taking advantage of the noise and singing in the resplendent building, they began

to talk in muffled tones. They boasted of the Christmas Eve supper which awaited them at their homes. The mayor's son had seen in the kitchen a monstrous goose, with the truffles spotted with black points like a leopard. At the home of the first alderman there was a little fir tree in a box, from the branches of which hung oranges, sweetmeats, and jumping-jacks. The cook at the broker's had tied the strings of her cap behind her head, which she never did except on Christmas holidays, when she always made her famous cake. And they spoke of the stockings which were to hang by the chimney and of what Santa Claus would put in them, their eyes sparkling in anticipation.

Little Wolf knew well from experience that his avaricious aunt would send him to bed without any supper; but, artlessly, because he was sure that he had been as good and as industrious all the year as he could be, he hoped the little Christ-child would not forget him, and he intended, when he went to bed, to put his wooden shoes on the hearth close by the ashes.

The midnight service over, people hastened home, impatient for the supper, and the little band of pupils, two by two, following the master, as before, left the church.

On the porch, sitting upon a stone bench in a Gothic niche, a little child had fallen asleep. It was wrapped in a white woolen cloak, but its feet were bare. The child was evidently not a beggar, for his cloak was clean and new, and near him, upon the ground, was a square, a hatchet, and other carpen-

ter's tools tied up in a neat bundle. Seen in the starlight, his countenance had an expression of divine sweetness, and his long, curly, reddish-brown hair seemed to form a halo around his head. But his feet, blue with the cold of this cruel December weather, were pitiful to see.

The warmly clad children passed the little stranger with indifference; some even cast looks of disdain upon him. But little Wolf, coming out from the church last, paused before the sleeping child, deeply affected.

"Ah!" thought the orphan, "this poor little one without shoes or stockings, on such a night! And he has not even a slipper or a wooden shoe to put near him while he sleeps, so that the Christ-child can leave him something!"

Prompted by the kindness of his heart, Wolf took off the shoe from his right foot, placed it before the sleeper, and, as best he could, sometimes hopping on one foot, sometimes limping and wetting his stocking in the snow, he returned to his aunt's home.

"Look at the good-for-nothing!" cried the woman, with fury. "What have you done with your shoe, little wretch?"

Wolf trembled with fear as he told the story.

"Ah! monsieur takes off his shoes for a beggar!" cried the contemptuous voice of the miser. "Ah, monsieur spoils a pair of shoes for a vagabond! This is something new, indeed. Well, since it is so, I will put the shoe which is left by the chimney and will see to it that the Christ-child puts beside it

something to whip you with. And you shall have nothing to eat all day but dry bread, and we will see if you will give your shoes to beggars!"

In hopeless misery the little fellow groped his way through the dark to the loft, and dropped asleep on his pillow wet with tears.

But the next morning when the old woman awoke and went down-stairs—oh, wonders! she saw the great chimney full of sparkling toys, sacks of magnificent bonbons, and presents of all sorts; and before this treasure, the right shoe that her nephew had given away was found by the side of the left one that she had put there the night before, and where she had expected to find a handful of sticks.

While little Wolf, who had run down-stairs on hearing the exclamations, stood in wondering delight before these beautiful gifts from the Christ-child, a great burst of laughter was heard outside. Wolf and his aunt went out and found the gossips of the town standing beside the public fountain. What had happened? Oh, a very amusing and unexpected thing! The children of the rich people of the village, those whose parents were wont to surprise them with beautiful presents, had found only switches in their stockings! And one told of seeing a circle of gold above the bench placed near the church, on the same spot where the child with the white mantle and bare feet had rested his head against the stones.

Wolf bent his head in silent devotion for he knew that the sleeping Child was Jesus of Nazareth, who had become for an hour the child that He

was when He worked in the home of His parents, and had performed this miracle to recompense the faith and charity of the little orphan.

POOR PAPA

By permission of "The Designer," New York

AT Christmas-time, poor papa tries, by sundry means and shifts,
To save from out his salary, to buy the children gifts;
And though he needs a new felt hat, he takes the cash, of course,
To get his precious baby boy a great big rocking-horse.

While all the time he must protest that it's the sheerest folly;
He walks, to save his car-fares up, to purchase Maude a dolly;
He don't get nice hot dinners now, but just a lunch instead,
And thereby he contrives to buy his eldest son a sled.

He badly needs a pair of gloves—the ones he wears aren't mates—

But does without them, for a while, to get the twins
some skates;
And all his nickels and his dimes he now finds very
handy
To fill the children's stockings up with popcorn,
nuts and candy.

But how they all will thank him soon, perhaps you
think to say;
Well, this is just the way things go, when comes
glad Christmas Day:
Dear mamma tells them they should all be quite
good girls and boys—
For 'tis the good old Santa Claus has brought them
these nice toys.

ELSIE DUNCAN YALE

CHRISTMAS

By permission of the Author

AT Christmas-time Dan Cupid plays
The cantrips that all lovers know;
He sets the coldest heart ablaze
To watch where careless Beauty strays
Beneath the magic mistletoe
He turns the baldest prose to rhyme
At Christmas-time.

Old maids forget dour days that lie
Between their autumn and their spring;
The moth becomes a butterfly,
Powdered with silver, bright of dye,
And daily wilful on the wing—
For seriousness is like a crime
At Christmas-time.

Old bachelors, that will not see
Their April's lusty green again,
Wag frosty head, bend gouty knee,
Because the frolic deity
Has made the blood through every vein
Prance with remembrance of their prime
At Christmas-time.

Young maids stand out upon the floor,
And old wives gossip by the fire,
While this skilled Archer, as of yore,
Sends forth his arrows by the score,
All winged and pointed with desire.
Who will may creep, who will may climb:
Love misses few at Christmas-time.

NORA CHESSON

A GREAT SAVING

"JOHN," said Mrs. Struggles, a little bashfully, "you know Christmas is coming?"

Mr. Struggles tried to appear astonished. "My gracious! Again?" he demanded.

Mrs. Struggles nodded a solemn assurance of that inevitable fact. "And—and ——" she hesitated.

"Of course," assented Mr. Struggles, resignedly. "Well, how much?"

"I've figured and scrimped and economized and cheese-pared all I possibly can, John," began Mrs. Struggles, apologetically.

"You haven't got it down to where your Christmas presents owe us money, have you?" interrupted Mr. Struggles, hopefully.

"Not quite," replied Mrs. Struggles, "but—but—well, I don't see how I can possibly get along with less than one hundred."

Mr. Struggles' face had grown graver and graver. "That's a good deal of money, my dear," he objected, hopelessly. "Especially just now. Can't you possibly drop some off your list or cut it down some way?"

Mrs. Struggles shook her head. "Really and truly, I've done my best already, John, dear," she said.

"Hum-m," considered Mr. Struggles, woefully. "Well, my dear, every dollar counts like a lightning calculator just now, and so suppose you drop me. I'll take the will for the deed."

"I'd hate like everything to do that, John. It won't seem like Christmas to you at all."

"But it will seem like heaven to save all that expense," argued Mr. Struggles.

"Well, if you are sure you honestly would rather, I might just this once."

"That's settled then," decided Mr. Struggles,

hastily taking out his check-book before she could reconsider. "Now how much is it?"

Mrs. Struggles' lips and fingers moved sychronously as she murmured a rapid mental calculation in which her husband, with ever increasing expectation, noted that a number of different amounts seemed to be involved. At last she reached a total, looked up brightly and announced:

"You can make the check for only ninety-nine dollars and sixty-eight cents now, John, dear!"

ALEXANDER RICKETTS

CHRISTMAS-LAND

I WONDER where the railroad starts
That runs to Christmas-land?
And do excursion tickets cost
More than a boy can stand?

If I had time and money, too,
I'd start to travel, and
I'd wander up and down till I
Had found the Christmas-land.

I wonder if good Santa Claus
Would leave a map for me.
I'd like to figure out how long
A voyage it would be.

MISTLETOE AND HOLLY

By permission of the Author

THE mistletoe is gemmed with pearls,
Red berries hath the holly.
Remember, all ye modest girls,
The mistletoe is gemmed with pearls,
And when it hangs above your curls,
Away with melancholy!
The mistletoe is gemmed with pearls,
Red berries hath the holly.

Since mistletoe is hard to find,
We do not need it, Mollie,
O do, I beg of you, be kind, —
Since mistletoe is hard to find,
Pretend that you are color-blind,
And kiss beneath this holly.
Since mistletoe is hard to find,
We do not need it, Mollie.

THOMAS A. DALY

CHRISTMAS JOY AND SORROW

HARK! the ringing of bells, glad Christmas bells, seems to swell out the sound—"Peace on earth, good will to men!"

Happy voices carol the song, "Good tidings of

glad joy!" and the silvery laughter of children echoes the refrain.

Fair forms gather at the Christmas feast, while the sprays of mistletoe and holly give greeting to all.

Beneath the glow and glitter of lights the dancers swing, with sparkling eyes and rose-hued cheeks.

And, towering over all, in its radiant beauty, splendid with gifts for every one, stands the Christmas tree. Shout upon shout breaks out upon the snowy air; and the Christ-child, listening, smiles His blessing.

But not everywhere is found the Christmas cheer.

Yonder the light of the Christmas Day breaks upon the home where Death has entered, and there will be no feasting there.

Silently, slowly, the sad hours slip by, and the chiming of the bells seems a mockery to the hearts wherein no joy dwells.

In the poverty-stricken home where little ones hold fast to their faith in some good fairy, a mother's heart is torn with anguish and pity as she remembers the prayers for God to "send Santa with lots of toys," and sees disappointment in the trustful eyes as they gaze upon the few poor trifles which she has bought at a sacrifice.

In yonder beautiful home there are Christmas toys a-plenty; but they are toys of a by-gone Christmas, and tears are falling upon the little wooden soldiers, the drum that baby hands used to rat-a-tat-tat, and the scarlet cap that rested on the fair curls of one whom the Christ-child has called.

This holiday with its merry-making means misery enough to the wife of the unfortunate wretch to whom the holy Christmas Day is only a day of rioting.

There are those to whom the Christmas Day brings only a flood of homesick tears, a longing for loved ones so far, far away that it seems as if even loving thoughts cannot reach them.

There is the patient invalid; she smiles in spite of suffering as she fondles the gift of a dear one. The thoughts of the feeble old man are bitter as he totters alone amid scenes of joy, muttering: "Christmas is for the young—for the young." The beggar at the door asks, "in the name of the Christ," for a bite to satisfy the gnawing of hunger.

Joy claims the Christmas Day, but as Sorrow dwelt with her at Bethlehem centuries ago, so they dwell together now; and Joy sheds her light over the gray robes of Sorrow, holds out her hand in comfort, speaks the cheering word, gives the loving gift; while the angels, watching, sing, "Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT

A CHRISTMAS MINUET

By permission of "The Critic," New York

(*Very effective if given with music and steps*)

WHEN silver flutes and violins
In Christmas-land are sighing
A dreamy waltz that sets the feet
Of youths and maidens flying,
I see among the plain black coats
And girlish rosebud faces
Strange figures of the long ago
Come out and take their places.

In stomachers and gay brocades
That time has stained and faded,
In buckled shoes and velvet suits
With gold belaced and braided;
They tread a stately minuet,
The courtliest of dances,
And underneath the mistletoe
Renew their old romances.

When chimes are rung and carols sung,
And snow the landscape covers,
The spirit of the olden time
Around the holly hovers.
Then every shadow to my gaze
A powdered head discloses,
And all the air is faintly sweet
With lavender and roses.

With lifted skirts of pink and blue,
They courtesy down the middle;
I hear, above the stops and strings,
The spinet and the fiddle,
The creaking of a coach and four
Between the pines and laurels,
And footsteps in the frozen snow
That vanish with the carols.

MINNA IRVING

DECEMBER

By permission of "The Globe Democrat," St. Louis

NO flower hast thou, no song of bird;
No vernal leaf by zephyr stirred;
No autumn joys with fruitage rare;
And every tree and shrub is bare.
Thy grasses all are dried and sear;
Thy winds are cold and chill and drear;
Thy sun, it fails with warmth benign,
To pierce yon dull gray clouds of thine;
And Night and Morn, they seemed to meet
Like ghosts of other days, and greet.
If mellow skies by chance appear,
And fleecy clouds by blue flecked clear;
Or sunsets fair, with crimson glow,
We still thy form and visage know.
And yet we see nor gloom nor frown,
December, 'neath thy holly crown.

Some falsely name thee month of gloom,
And grudgingly they give thee room.
Though Nature hast half hid her face,
We give to thee a welcome place.
No other month of all the year
Can bring to us such joy and cheer.
No flower, how sweet, that scents the air,
With Christmas holly can compare;
No song, how sweet, that bird can sing,
Like carols heard for Christ, the King.
And, best of all, at Christmas time,
The heart, by melody sublime,
Is stirred to noble thought and deed —
To generous care for others' need;
To love more warm and kind and true
In what we think and say and do.

ALICE ARNOLD

MONEY AND DREAMS

By permission of "The Herald," New York

HE settled himself in the roomy chair in his big, old house where he had lived so long that the city had grown up away and beyond him, leaving the house, which had been in a fashionable neighborhood, so far down town that there was little more than the hum of business to be heard all day around

it. The old man's housekeeper brought him a drink, and one of his nephews came in to inquire how he had stood the day.

He had so many nephews and nieces to look after his comfort. When they tried to persuade him to go away for a little rest during the Christmas holidays, he had said :

"Rest ! Who wants rest ? Who cares for Christmas? If you let money rest it rusts—rusts ! Turn it over, keep turning it over ; it grows, it grows ! "

The old financier was the possessor of many millions. But he walked alone. This evening he sat in the twilight which settled itself thickly about him. The roar of the metropolis was dying away in tired sobs outside. It had been an unusually hard day. He closed his eyes. He felt such a strange sense of oppression. No, he was not dizzy. It had passed. He opened his eyes and put up his hand to unfasten his collar. At his neck he touched a twisted cord of silk that was around it. He pulled at the cord and drew out its length. From it hung a ring—a silver ring—old-fashioned and worn, and on it two raised hearts lying against each other and rubbed smooth by time.

He sat now with his eyes closed again and his hand folded over the ring on his breast. He dreamed —and it was his last dream. It was not Christmas Eve to the old man now, but summer—nearly fifty years ago. The roar of the city gave way to the scent and quiet of an old garden ; the dust and grime to the dew of a country evening, its breeze lightly moving the leaves of the trees and fluttering the ruf-

fles of a girl's muslin frock, with its pattern of summer blossoms upon it.

A boy—such a boyish country boy—took the silver ring, then new and shining, from his pocket and put it on the hand of the girl in the flowered muslin frock. Then they kissed each other, and the girl fell to sobbing, with her arms about her companion's neck, and he spoke: "Never mind, dear; Annie dear. I am going away to make a fortune, and I'm coming back for you, and I will take you away to the city, and you will be rich and have everything you want."

"But I don't like the city. I should be so afraid and so confused, and you might not love me there as you now do here in the country. People in the city forget each other."

"No, they don't; not if they really love each other, and I love you. Nothing can ever make me forget you. See, not as long as evening comes after the day and the stars come with it."

They kissed each other again.

The ring came back to him in a letter with a flower from Annie's grave.

Never once had he gone to seek the grave to rest by it a moment. Work became his love and gold the star that guided him.

Now he clasped the silver ring tighter, tighter. By and by he gasped and fell forward. His clasp relaxed; he sighed once, a deep sigh, then lay there quite still. And thus they found him.

CHRISTMAS

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

HO! ho! thrice ho! for the mistletoe,
Ho! for the Christmas holly;
And ho! for the merry boys and girls
Who make the day so jolly.
And ho! for the deep, new-fallen snow
For the lace-work on each tree,
And ho! for the joyous Christmas bells
That ring so merrily.

Ho! ho! thrice ho! for the fire's warm glow,
For the mirth and cheer within;
And ho! for the tender, thoughtful hearts,
And the children's merry din.
Ho! ho! for the strong and loving girls,
For the manly, tender boys,
And ho! thrice ho! for the coming home
To share in the Christmas joys.

FRANK H. SWEET

WILLIE'S DREAM

By permission of "The Delineator," New York

TUCKED tight within his trundle bed,
Wee Willie dreamed his presents came,
And strange and fearsome things they said:

"You must not ride me," spake the sled,
And shook, in wrath, its clipper frame.

The top hummed in an angry way,
"You must not whip me, as you did
The top that came last Christmas day;
To whip a top is cruel play,
And by the law of toys forbid."

Then growled the drum, "I won't be beat
Like other drums you've owned before."
The toy lamb gave a sorry bleat,
"I won't be left upon the street,"
It said, "or trampled to the floor."

A soldier, stern, and made of tin,
Looked with an all-accusing eye.
"'Tis time your parents should begin
A course of proper discipline,"
He said—and waited a reply.

Then jumped the Jack from out his box—
"I, too, must claim my rights to-night;
I won't give people nervous shocks,
And you must keep the catch that locks
Me always fast secured, and tight."

Old Noah came from out his ark,
And joined the rabble talking there—
"I wish to make this one remark,"
He said; "my boat will not embark
On any wash-tub sea affair."

And thus they grumbled, one and all;
A wooly dog, a plaster cat,
A roly-poly rubber ball,
A picture game beside the wall,
A plumed and gaudy soldier hat.

Then, suddenly, they ceased their noise,
A step fell heavy on the stair,
A voice cried loudly: "All good boys
Should now arise, and view their toys!"
And papa stood by Willie there.

Pajama clad, wee Willie stood,
A thoughtful frown upon his brow—
"To all these toys I will be good;
I never knew, nor understood,"
He said, "that toys could feel, till now."

STACY E. BAKER

CHRISTMAS FAIRIES

OH, the Christmas Fairies are in the air!
They're flitting about us and everywhere.
There's the Fairy of Peace and of Good-will;
And the Fairy of Love that bids no ill
Come on this Christmas Day.

Oh, the Fairy of Cheer sings in the heart,
For the Fairy of Gifts has played its part,

And has brought the Fairy of Gratefulness
For the Saviour's dear Gift of full Redress
On that first Christmas Day.

The Fairy of Laughter goes hand in hand
With the Fairy of Feast, throughout the land;
And the Fairy of Song its music brings,
While the Fairy of Bells its rapture rings
On this glad Christmas Day.

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

By permission of the Author

"NO, Giles, I don't believe in Christmas. If I have told you so once, I have told you a score of times. I will not have any Christmas flummery where I can see it. Please understand that distinctly."

"Very good, my lord."

"You can stick holly and evergreen in the servants' hall, if they can't get on without it, but I will have no Christmas foolery anywhere else in the house. Christmas is an effete, nonsensical revival. I will have nothing to do with it."

"Very good, my lord," the butler repeated respectfully, leaving the library to return to the housekeeper's room and announce that,—

"His lordship was worse set against Christmas than he had ever known him in all these years."

"Old curmudgeon," the housekeeper, a newly-imported personage, said, with a resounding sniff, "he doesn't deserve to be in a Christian land."

Giles stiffened. He disapproved of any one who called his master, or his master's actions, in question.

"His lordship has a right to his own opinions," he said, coldly, "and Christmas is a time that reminds him of many sad things. No doubt he knows his own business best."

"Oh, no doubt," snapped the housekeeper; "and I have a right to my opinion too, which is that your precious lordship is a curmudgeon, and ought to be ashamed of himself that's what I think. You can take it or leave it."

Mr. Giles presumably left it, for he sauntered majestically from the room.

While this conversation was in course of progress down-stairs, John, Earl of Maresbrook, sat up-stairs alone in his library: his armchair drawn close to the blazing fire, an open book in his hand. But his eyes were not looking at the printed page, they were turned toward the glowing coals in the grate, and the frown which had drawn his brows together at his butler's words, still rested on his face.

"Holly and evergreen in the hall indeed,—and in here!—Bah—the old fool must be in his dotage. When have I ever wished to be reminded of Christmas, or to see Christmas decorations—since—since ——"

No—he had never been able to endure Christmas decorations, or to tolerate any Christmas rejoicings,

since that day so long and long ago, when he and Jack had spent their last Christmas here together.

Pshaw! It was ridiculous to allow these tiresome memories, these thoughts of bygone days, to rise up and look him in the face now,—now, when they had been dead and buried and—forgotten for many and many a year. In spite of the warm, well lit room, the old man shivered, and put out his hands to the blaze, as though those memories of the past chilled him.

Once upon a time, Christmas at the Hall had been a season of gaiety and rejoicing, a time of unfeigned gladness,—goodwill: but that was before Jack and he had parted with the bitterness, which all the intervening years had been powerless to wipe out.

With a great rustling and crackling of its leaves, he unfolded the newspaper, and spread it before him, mastering its contents by the sheer strength of will which had enabled him to thrust behind him those ghosts of the past that would rise and look into his face: those thoughts of Jack, which stirred at his heart, because the Christmas season had come round again. The opening of the front door, followed by the sound of voices in the hall, made him lift his head sharply.

"I will see nobody to-night," the reflection went through his mind, "and if it is the rector,—he may be sent about his business like the rest. I will see nobody." He lifted again the paper which he had lowered for an instant, when the library door was slowly opened, and the butler appeared upon the threshold.

"A young gentleman wishes to speak to your lordship," he said, in a strangely shaking voice, "he ——"

"I can see nobody to-night," the answer came quickly and peremptorily. "I—I am busy: it is past six o'clock,—and I can see nobody."

"The—the—little—I should say the—er—young gentleman has come a long way, your lordship,—and if ——"

"Ask his business. It cannot be anything urgent, and if it is urgent, it must wait till to-morrow morning. Twelve hours or so will make no difference. I can see nobody to-night."

"I am afraid the young gentleman won't take no for an answer, my lord," Giles said gently; "he seems wonderfully determined."

"Won't take no for an answer!" Lord Maresbrook leaped from his chair with amazing celerity for a man of his years.

"Has Christmas driven you mad that you should dare to come to me and tell me you are incapable of turning away an importunate visitor? It seems that I must turn out this pushing person myself,—not take no for an answer indeed!"

The old Earl walked briskly across the library, and into the hall, when, from out of the shadows near the front door a small boy stepped into the circle of light immediately under the hanging lantern. He was a very small boy, slight and sturdy of build, dressed in a rough pilot coat, and holding his cap in his hand. The lamplight fell softly on his curly head, and on the fair uplifted face, from which a

pair of bright blue eyes looked up into Lord Maresbrook's startled countenance.

"How do you do?" he said. "I've come home for Christmas. I'm dreadfully disappointed about there being no holly and mistletoe."

"Come—home—for—Christmas?" Lord Maresbrook said slowly, deeper and deeper amazement spreading over his face. "What does it matter to you whether there is holly here or no? Who are you? And why have you come here at all?"

"Well you see—I've come for Christmas," the small boy answered, thrusting a confiding hand into the Earl's limp and unresponsive one. "I've always wanted to come ever since I was a tiny weeny little chap, from really ever since I was a baby—ages ago." From the vast age of seven years, babyhood looked very far away, and the small sturdy form was drawn to its full height.

"You see, out West," he went on, "out West we don't have houses like this, and I wanted most dreadfully to see the holly berries shining against the black oak, same as it used to do."

Something in the touch of the little hand that clung to his own, checked the impatient question that rose to the old man's lips: something about the fair, curly head that reached just above his elbow, sent an odd, unaccustomed thrill through his veins: the small clear voice seemed like the echo of a voice out of that far away past, when Jack ——

"Why ever didn't you have any holly?" the boy's voice broke in upon his thoughts. "Is it too late to put some up now? It ought to be there by

Christmas morning, oughtn't it? And I've learned Good King Wenceslaus to say to you too," he added, with a child's irrelevance.

Lord Maresbrook started, as if he had been stung, and his hand suddenly closed convulsively over the hand he held.

"I never allow Christmas carols here," he said abruptly.

"Dad said you always had carols every Christmas morning—dad said there was holly just everywhere, all round the pictures, and up the bannisters, and along the oak in the hall, dad said ——"

The sudden clutch of the old man's hand on his shoulder, made the boy wince.

"Who is dad? Why do you come here, and tell me what your father says? What does it matter to me?"

"Didn't you know about my coming? Dad wrote a letter," the little lad replied. "The letter must have got lost in the post, 'cos dad wrote it, and then he sent me home to you for Christmas."

"Who are you, that is the question you haven't answered yet?"

"Why, I'm dad's boy, of course, and dad was your boy. You haven't forgotten about dad being your boy, have you? I didn't think dads ever forgot about their own boys.

"I'm—dad's—boy," the child repeated shakily, awed and oppressed by the oppressive silence, "and I—just came—to say my Christmas carol to you, same as dad used to do."

Giles' breathing became all at once like a sup-

pressed sob, and his master turned on him fiercely.

"What is all this tomfoolery?" he exclaimed. "Is it some plot? And are you in it? Who sent this boy here to—to trouble me?"

"I won't be any trouble," the child said earnestly. "I can wash myself and dress myself and all, only sometimes mummy helps me ever such a little bit with the difficult buttons."

"I know nothing about it, my lord, nothing whatever," Giles put in tremblingly. "I was as surprised as your lordship could have been when I saw the little gentleman standing on the step outside, and I never guessed, I never thought—until I saw the likeness——"

"The likeness, what likeness?" exclaimed the Earl.

"The little gentleman is the living likeness of the portrait over the dining-room mantelpiece, my lord," was the respectful answer. "I couldn't doubt who he was directly I set eyes on him."

"Turn up the lamps in the dining-room," the old Earl said, shortly, "and let us see this wonderful likeness, then perhaps"—he did not end the sentence, but grasping the boy's shoulder again, he pushed him into the huge dining-room, round whose paneled walls hung the dead and gone lords and ladies of the Maresbrook house, looking down with varying expressions upon their grim old descendant, and the little blue-eyed boy by his side. Upon the mantelpiece stood two tall lamps whose light fell full upon the picture in the centre of the wall, the

picture of a boy dressed in the closely fitting white satin doublet of a far off date, a white cap decked with pearls resting on his short fair curls. The blue eyes of the pictured child looked down at the old man on the hearth rug, with an expression which was exactly reproduced in the blue eyes of the living boy: the eyes that were turned from the pictured boy in his shining satin garments, to the small boy in his rough pilot coat, were misty and dim.

"Dad's boy," he said, in strange, broken accents: then looking over his shoulder at the butler in the doorway, he exclaimed fiercely, "Of course I see there is a likeness,—any fool could see that,—but—but it is probably a chance likeness,—and ——"

"Dad's often told me about this room," the boy broke in eagerly; "he said there was all our ancestors looking down at us from the walls. And, oh! please, before you send me away again, might I just see the room where dad used to say his carol to you on Christmas morning, when he was a little chap like me? I've learned Good King Wenceslaus on purpose to say it just like dad did."

The old Earl's eyes looked down again at the curly head so little above his elbow, and with again a gesture that was more rough than gentle, he drew the child from the dining-room into the warm, well lighted library.

With a low exclamation that sounded like an inarticulate cry, the old man closed the door, leaving Giles outside in the hall, and shutting himself into the library with the child, whose alert gaze was traveling eagerly round the room.

"It's all every bit what dad said," he cried excitedly; "and oh! if you please, don't send me away till after Christmas. I do want dreadfully to say my carol to you to-morrow morning, exactly the same as dad did."

"Where—is—dad?" The words came thickly and with difficulty; the old man sank into his arm-chair as if he were very tired.

"Dad's at home on the ranch but he said he was going to send me home for Christmas, to see you, and to see the dear old place,—and I was to say to you,—I was to say ——"

"What were you to say?" The old voice grew eager,—impatient.

"My goodness! I nearly forgot," the child's laugh rang round the room. "I've thought about it all the time, and I'm so 'cited now, I nearly forgot. Why dad told me to say, 'Love the boy for old sake's sake, and let me come back some day.' There! I've remembered, and please may I just stay with you till after Christmas?"

The old man's head bent lower, lower yet, till the gray hairs and the fair curls mingled together: the trembling old arm drew the sturdy small figure into a close embrace, the shaky old voice said wistfully,

"I—I think I shall keep you with me now, and—if I keep you,—what would you like to do?"

Two strong little arms were flung round the speaker's neck: two soft lips were laid against the worn old face: and the small clear voice exclaimed triumphantly,

"First, I'd like to put up holly and mistletoe and things all over the house, same as dad used to do, and then we'll sit here and you'll tell me fairy stories same as you used to tell dad: and to-morrow we'll have a happy Christmas,—you and me together, and I'll be your little boy till dad comes home. Will dad be back soon? I'd have liked dad here for Christmas." There was a pause, then the old man's hand rested on the curly head and he said very gently,

"We can't get dad home for this Christmas but —he will be here long before next Christmas,—long, long before then. You need not be afraid, little chap. Next year daddy will be—home—for—Christmas."

L. G. MOBERLY

IF I WERE SANTA CLAUS

IF I could be old Santa Claus,
I'll tell you what I'd do;
I'd make a noise so boys could tell
When I came down the flue.
And then I'd spread my packs of toys
Right out upon the floor,
And tell the boys to help themselves
While I went back for more.

It ain't no use to sneak around
And wait till we're asleep.
I guess I'll try and stay awake
And watch a chance to peep;
And then I'll tell old Santa Claus
To please to let me come
And see inside the packs myself,
And hunt a toy drum.

For I don't see how Santa Claus
Could know I've got a sled,
Or that I want an engine,
And a tool-chest, painted red.
And so if I were Santa Claus
I wouldn't cheat the boys,
I'd come right in the daytime,
And let them choose their toys.

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT

THE VIRGIN'S LULLABY

By permission of "Cornhill Magazine," London, England

HUSH Thee, hush Thee, little Son,
Dearest and divinest One:
Thine are all the untamed herds
That upon the mountain go,
Thine are all the timid birds
Thine the thunders and the snow.

Cry not so. Husho, my dear!
Thunder shall not come Thee near
While its roar shall frighten Thee.
Mother holds Thee safe and warm;
Thou shalt walk upon the sea
And cry "Peace" unto the storm.

Thou shalt take the souls of men
In Thine hand, as I a wren.
But not yet, not yet, my Son.
Thou art still a babe asleep;
All Thy glories are unwon,
All mine own Thou art to keep.

Some day I shall see Thee stand
King and Lord of every land.
Now I hold Thee to my breast,
And delight to feel Thee near.
Some day—ah! this time is best,
Hush Thee, hush Thee, Babe most dear!

NORA HOPPER

ANN TEEK'S SILK DRESS

By permission of "The Epworth Herald," Chicago

ANN TEEK, from the time she had first donned long skirts and put up her hair, had always wanted a silk dress—a lustrous black silk that would swish when she walked. She wanted it for special

occasions like weddings and funerals, and she thought a black silk would be suitable for either.

"We'll try to get you a silk on your eighteenth birthday," her mother promised, in all sincerity; and from the date of that promise the silk dress was outlined—an unfading vision—before her expectant hopes.

But her birthday came and went without the longed-for hope being realized—"they were too poor, and there were so many children to be clothed and fed." "Never mind, Ann," said the weary-bodied, but hope-inspiring mother, "perhaps when you're twenty-one and the children are a little older, and if the 'sparagus bed that your pappie set out last year turns out all right, and we don't have to put a new roof on the shed, and no bad luck comes, we can get it for you."

There were so many provisos in the mother's words of encouragement that Ann doubted, and as the months lengthened into years she beheld them one by one fail—except the growing of the children. To begin with, there was another Teek—the ninth—to be clothed and fed; the asparagus bed produced a few spindley sprouts, and ceased bearing; the shed roof was crushed in under a heavy fall of snow; and a young heifer was choked trying to swallow a large piece of turnip. But there was grit and determination in Ann's make-up, and when, to the other misfortunes, was added the death of her father, followed soon after by her mother's, and she was left with the family on her hands, every reasonable prospect of getting the black silk seemed to be banished

to an indefinite future; but she never allowed the vision to entirely fade. It was a labor of unremitting toil for eighteen years that she faithfully performed, until the last of her eight charges was settled in life, and she looked down the road at the dust raised by a disappearing carriage which was taking Hester, "the baby," with her husband to the railroad station, and she was left alone on her fortieth birthday.

"I've done my best by 'em all," she mused. "And now that they're all fixed in homes of their own, I'm going to get my dress with the very first money I can save. I did want my black silk for Hester's wedding, but I couldn't quite get it and fit her out as she should be; but never mind"—and she smoothed the skirt of her new alpaca—"I'll get it soon."

Ann had been so accustomed to caring for others that when she found herself alone she was restless and dissatisfied, so she went about the country at every call of distress and ministered to the needy until she became a public benefactor. "Ann Teek'll come," people would say, if there was a case of need, "she'll be glad to come." And somehow they took it for granted that just because she would be glad to, she would go and expect nothing in return. Although absent from home much of the time she managed to farm the single acre left of the original farm and saved from the sale of vegetables and eggs, for her dress.

"Thought I'd 'a' had it before this," she said as she counted the money in the corner of her bureau

drawer, "but it 'pears to me it does take a long time to get twenty-five dollars together; but I'm glad I've got these fifteen all saved, and now I'll need only ten more!"

"Ann! Ann! Ann Teek! Where are you?" she heard some one calling one morning when she was busy in the garden, and she raised her head and saw Joel Mudley leaning out of his buggy, gazing toward the house.

"I'm here, Joel, what are you wanting?" she answered.

"David Knowles' wife's fell and broke her leg. Couldn't you come over and look after her and the children and take care of the house a spell?"

Ann was soon ready, and climbed in beside Joel with a bundle under her arm, prepared for several weeks' stay.

"I reckon you'll have a pretty hard time of it at David's," remarked Joel. "For they're in a bad fix, with him out of work so long."

Ann's arrival was a blessing to the household, and no one out of David Knowles' family knew that, beside her work, the money in the drawer, the savings of three years' denial, gradually changed into shoes and clothing for the children, and for necessary household demands.

Then began the purpose anew to achieve her heart's desire, and little by little there were placed in the drawer the results of effort and denial until at the end of four years twenty dollars looked up silently into Ann's expectant face. With a quiet chuckle

she said: "I'll write to the store in Amestown to-morrow for samples."

Three times a day for nearly a week she went to the post-office, until one day a large stuffy envelope was handed her and her heart beat high, for she knew it contained the samples.

Three times a day for many days, she spread the samples upon the table until her choice narrowed down to two, and she was putting them away, when Belinda Dawson came in. She sank into a chair and burst into tears. "Oh, Ann, I'm in dreadful trouble!"

"What is it?" asked Ann, sympathetically.

"Why, my son Willie has misused twenty-five dollars of the grocer's money where he has been stayin'; but the grocer says he won't put him in prison if I make up the amount by to-morrow morning; and I ain't got one dollar in all the world, and —I don't—know where to get it—or what to do!" she sobbed, while Ann sat by in perfect silence.

"Of course you ain't got it, Ann; I know that; but I wanted to tell some one as I knowed would sympathize with me."

"I am sorry for you, Belinda, and I hope you get the money somehow," said Ann, with an effort.

"I know you are sorry, Ann. Good-night." And Ann watched her walk slowly away, then she put out the light and went to bed.

"I'm dreadful sorry, dreadful sorry," she said over and over to herself. She tossed restlessly.

"Are you sorry, Ann Teek?" a voice seemed to

say. "What does the Bible say about pure and undefiled religion visitin' the fatherless and the widowed? And what are you doin', Ann Teek? Are you livin' up to Scripture in Widow Dawson's case?" And she arose with the first streaks of gray and went over to Belinda's with the necessary money to save Willie from prison.

That day she returned the samples with a letter to the store, saying she was not ready to get her dress yet.

Her footsteps were slower now and the white dominated in her hair. More slowly the savings dropped into the drawer, but her purpose kept its determination, and after eight years of waiting she again beheld twenty-five dollars in her place of deposit. Then a change suddenly took place in Ann. She shut herself in from all intercourse with her friends. She even ceased going to the church, and when neighbors or the minister called to inquire about her, she, ever on the lookout, hastened to lock herself away.

But one day she went to Amestown, and said to a clerk in the prineipal store: "I want to see your black silk." She ran her hand caressingly over the pattern she liked best. Then she reluctantly took her precious savings out, and counted it all over—a ten-dollar gold piece, two five-dollar bills, and five dollars in smaller change.

"It's just in time," she soliloquized on the homeward journey. "I did hate to go to the Christmas doin's next week in the same alpaca I've worn so many year. It'll be a Christmas present to myself."

On her way home she stopped and engaged Tabitha Hunt to help her make it.

"You don't mean to tell me you've got a black silk!" said Tabitha, as they unrolled the goods, and both were so busy admiring it that they did not hear a carriage stop before the door, and were startled by a knock.

"Are you Ann Teek?" asked a strange voice, as Ann opened the door.

"That's been my name for nigh onto sixty year," answered Ann.

"I've come on a sad errand," continued the stranger, taking the chair Ann placed for him. "Your second cousin, Pamilla Teek's husband, Thomas Woolley, over at Mastersonville, died yesterday."

"That's too bad," said Ann, wiping away a tear. "We must get the dress done in time for the funeral, Tabitha."

"The widow is awful poor," continued the stranger, looking at the silk on the table. "Unless a way is provided he will have to be buried by the township."

"That must not be," said Ann, desperately. "No Teeks' relation was ever buried by charity yet."

"Well, there ain't any way out of it unless some of their relations bury him," said the man.

"Tabitha Hunt, will you wrap up that silk?" said Ann, quickly. "I'm goin' to Amestown on the next train. They said they'd take it back if it didn't suit, bein' all in one piece."

"She's queer," said the clerk, as Ann left the store with the twenty-five dollars she had given him for the silk clutched in her hand.

But perhaps Ann Teek's heart understood, best of all in the village, the meaning of "peace and good-will," that Christmas tide, as once again she turned her black alpaca.

IN SANTA CLAUS TIME

By permission of "The Constitution," Atlanta, Ga.

AIN'T they lookin' rosy —
Ain't they feelin' prime!
Li'l' bit of fellers,
In the Santy Claus time!

Peekin' from the kiver —
Ever' li'l' face,
When the night wind rumbles
In the chimney place.

"Listen to the witch wind!" —
Hide each curly head!
It's nuthin' but the runnin'
Of the reindeer on the shed!

An' while the dark is driftin'
To the mornin' beams,
They're in the Christmas country,
Holdin' hands with dreams!

FRANK L. STANTON

CHRISTMAS ACROSTIC

C is for Christmas, best day of the year!
H is for Holly, the Christmas cheer.
R is for Ringing of bells, glad and free!
I is for Imgard, who founded the tree.
S is for Santa Claus, filled with glee!
T is for Toys, the stocking to fill.
M is for Mistletoe, hung with good will!
A is for Anthems that merrily ring!
S is for Saviour, the Christmas King!

ROSAMOND LIVINGSTONE MCNAUGHT.

WITH NEITHER PURSE NOR SCRIP

By permission of "The Teacher's Magazine," New York

CARLOTTA opened her eyes in the gray light of the Christmas morning. She had been dreaming of golden grain fields, streaked with poppies; now, instead, she saw the gray walls of Mrs. Cum-

mings' back room. Two years and a half ago she had left her prairie home to study in an eastern school, from which she graduated with credit. Then she sought the city, hoping to secure a position in the public schools, but after four months of waiting she had grown disheartened. Her store of money was rapidly diminishing, and Carlotta was seriously contemplating any kind of work that would keep the wolf from the door.

"I wish it were not Christmas Day," she murmured, "I have nothing to be merry over this year,—no friends, no presents, no money to make presents with."

As she finished her toilet, a sudden thought came floating inexplicably from a long-forgotten sermon or scripture reading:—

"Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor script for your journey."

"That means me," thought Carlotta; "I have neither purse nor script, but I can give myself."

"Merry Christmas, Mrs. Cummings," she said brightly, as she sat down to breakfast. "And how is Bessie?" to a little girl who stuck close to her mamma, and cried peevishly.

"My sister is sick in Malden, and I must take the eleven o'clock express to her," answered Mrs. Cummings. "How I'll manage to get my work done with Bessie hanging on me every minute is an unsolved problem."

Carlotta had intended going to church, but she said quickly: "Leave Bessie with me, and we'll tell stories and cut paper dolls." Bessie paused

suddenly in a preparation for a roar, and a little smile curled the corners of her sober mouth. For an hour and a half Carlotta's tongue and scissors were busy, making the little one happy with fairy tales and paper dolls. Then she decided on a walk, and when but a few steps from the house another opportunity came. She was startled by the vociferous howls of a small boy who was clinging to the rope of a sled, while his mother addressed him from an open window:

"Joseph Peterson McConnell, you jest shet up and quit yellin'. It's no kind of use—you can't go to the common; I wouldn't dass to let you—you're too little."

Joseph Peterson McConnell opened his mouth in agony, and rent the air with his cries, as he danced about on a pair of diminutive red-topped boots.

"What is the trouble?" inquired Carlotta, pausing with a sudden impulse.

"He wants to go to the common with his new sled," explained Mrs. McConnell. "The other young ones run off and left him. It's kinder too bad, but I don't dass let him go alone."

"Why, it's a shame!" said Carlotta, sympathetically. "The idea! Having Santa Claus bring you a new sled, and not being able to use it. I'll take him over and look after him. My name is Benton."

"Yes, I know ye," said the woman. "I've seen ye at Mrs. Cummin's when I go to take home the washin'. You're real kind, and Joseph 'nd be dreadful tickled."

Joseph Peterson gazed hopefully up at Carlotta, and every inch of his freckled face radiated.

"Jump up," said Carlotta, "I'll be your horse. We'll be back at one, Mrs. McConnell."

As they reached the common little Joseph Peterson could not resist sticking out his tongue at the troop of children who came up begging Carlotta to ride with them. She allowed herself to be dragged up hill by more hands than the rope would well hold; she was treated to "bites" of Christmas candy from sundry coat pockets, proffered by mittened hands.

Jack Fitzgerald, the leader, politely invited her to attend the festival of his club that afternoon. Carlotta consented, and at three found herself in the great room where the "Columbian Cadets" held their sessions. It was a mixed audience of grammar school lads with their mothers, sisters, and a few others. They laughed and clapped gaily as the burly Santa Claus cracked boyish jokes, and Carlotta was enjoying it all, when Jack Fitzgerald came up and asked her to play for them. She was not a finished musician, but she could play the old jigs and reels in a way to stir the blood, and every one who could danced from sheer light-heartedness.

Carlotta reached home in the evening very content with the day's enterprises that had called for neither purse nor script.

"This has been a lovely Christmas," she said, as she took up a letter that lay on her table. It was brief, but very satisfactory, signed by the city's most popular supervisor, and read :—

"Dear Miss Benton: Merry Christmas. You will receive your formal appointment to Woodford Primary to-morrow. I congratulate not only you, but the town."

THE EMPTY STOCKING

By permission of "The Post Dispatch," St. Louis, Mo.

THE tragedy of children's eyes
That wake expectant Christmas Day,
And find the world yet cold and gray,
Would hush the harps of Paradise.

The sob of pain from lips forlorn
That thought to babble o'er a doll,
But found none answering their call,
Would choke the bliss in Gabriel's horn.

The melancholy cry of him
Who thought to wake and find a drum,
And found no drum at all had come,
Would pierce to Heaven's very rim.

Dear Santa Claus, oh, hear their prayer!
Be careful lest we hear again
The tragedy, the sob of pain
Of those whose lives are bare.

THE CHIMNEY DRUMMER-BOY

By permission of the Author and The Outlook Company, New York

(*To be read in drum-major time*)

THERE'S a boy I know, and he drums all day,
For his chief delight is in soldier play.
'Tis a very little boy,
And a very big drum,
And everywhere he goes he makes things hum,
With his brum, b-rrr rum-brum, 'm Brum! Brum!

When the rooster crows at break of day,
Then his kettle-drum drums the reveille.
At noon and at night,
As he comes from school,
Then he drums the "Retreat from Sebastopol."
And the neighbors all hum,
When they hear him come —
Hi diddle-dumpty, tinkle-tankle-tum,
Brum, br-rrr rum-brum, Brum!

Now Santa Claus heard him, one Christmas eve,
And he said to himself: "'Tis clear, I perceive,
That this idle boy is no good here;
For to study and work are not his sphere.
So I'll take him with me,
My drummer to be,
And I'll feed him on jam and peppercorn tea.
And my elves will come

When they hear him drum —
Plan, rat-a-plan, tum-e-tum-tum,
Brum, br-rrr rum-brum, Brum!

That night, as he slept in his trundle-bed,
With his drum and his drum-sticks under his head,
They were all whisked off up the chimney flue —
The drum stuck tight
But the boy went through.
Then Santa Claus sneezed with the soot in his nose,
And the boy woke up, as you may suppose.
He lost his hold on the chimney rim;
Head over heels he tumbled in —
Bim! (That was his head.)
Bim, tumble-in, bim-bim! (Those were his heels.)

There he is in his own big drum,
For he can't get out till the kingdom-come.
So he drums all day, to his heart's delight,
And the elfins feed him every night.
In the fireplace dark,
If you listen sharp,
When the house is still, and the watch-dogs bark,
When the wind's northeast, and the storm is come,
Up the chimney glum,
You can hear him drum —
B-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r rum, Brum!

WILLIAM J. LONG

THE PEACE OF CHRIST

By permission of the Author

THE mighty wrought thro' the ages;
They ploughed with the lance,
They sowed with the bow,
They reaped with the sword.
But bitter the fruit of their tillage,
The truce of the crushed,
The peace of the strong.

In all the garnered years
One starlit night,
In all the ways of earth,
One lowly byre is bright.

There, where the frosty breath of kine
Arose as incense at the shrine,
In human mother's love and pain
An humble little child was born,
Who saw beyond the prophet's ken,
Who made the gentle message plain—
Of, "Peace on earth, good-will to men."

The peace of slave and crown,
The peace of weak and strong;
Wide as the sky above,
As long as time is long,
The peace of God came down,
The peace of Love.

WILLIAM KENT

LAONG'S CHRISTMAS MISSION

By permission of "Over Sea and Land," Philadelphia

LAONG was the son of a prosperous Chinese tea-merchant of the better class, who did not often mix with the foreign element of San Francisco. He had a round olive face with a deep dimple in the chin, dark, bright eyes, and a long, smoothly braided queue. He wore wide, dark-blue trousers and loose jacket prettily ornamented with gold cord and close fitting cap.

It was just four days before Christmas that he had a talk with the Halburys.

"Klismas? What 'bout Klismas?" he asked.

"Why, Christmas night, long ago, Jesus was born ——"

"Ah, yes," said Laong, with a little smile of instant recollection, "an' angels sing with joy and make all peoples so happy. Ah, yes, I know Klismas now."

"And we all have good times and give each other nice things to celebrate Christ's birthday because He wishes us to be happy," said Mrs. Halbury. "When Jesus was here on earth He said whatever we could do for the poor without selfishness He would accept for Himself; so out of gratitude for His great love and gift to us, we give to the poor and needy, and so have the true Christmas spirit. If we only give to those we love, or expect to receive presents from, in return, we do not fulfil Christ's commandment."

Laong listened with pleased attention. "Make

the poor happy," he asked, "an' that pleases the good Jesus? In China, on feast days, we mek the gods much presents of gold an' silver, but if the good Jesus will not have it so ——" He thought the matter over very carefully on his way home, and decided that to give to people of his own race would be selfish. Suddenly he saw a child running toward him from the opposite side of the street. At the curb she turned and looked back at the rumbling wagons and fell headlong, losing her tin pail, which rolled down the gutter out of her reach. Laong ran after it and picked it up.

"It had three pennies in it," sobbed the child, when she saw the empty pail. "Oh, what shall I do now? Poor Dick can't have any breakfast."

"That velly bad," Laong said. "You got no more pennies?"

She shook her head sorrowfully, and both began to search for the lost money. Meantime the child told of a sick brother and no means to buy food and medicine. Laong felt that his opportunity had come. After asking her where she lived, he took from the silk lining of his sleeves a tiny silver piece, which he joyfully offered his little friend, and she, with hearty thanks, ran off to buy Dick's breakfast of milk.

Christmas morning dawned clear and mild. Laong began making his small preparations immediately after breakfast.

"What for, Laong?" Tao asked, watching his son while he sat by smoking his hookah.

"For Jesus," the boy answered, and paused to

explain his plans. The father turned the matter about in his mind. His hopes were centred in his only son, and he desired above all things that Laong should grow up to be a good and honorable man; therefore he made no objections to Laong's plans.

First, Laong put into his basket his father's contribution of tea and coffee of the finest brand, done up in colored packages; then a number of Chinese confections, made of sweet and perfumed rice powder and dusted with pink and white sugar; then candy animals—quite a menagerie, chiefly of the dragon family; a basket of nuts, cakes and fruits. Lastly, he added some books printed on silvery white wood as thin as paper, with beautiful colored pictures; but he was not quite satisfied, for the basket was not full. He could think of nothing else that would prove acceptable. Yes, there was one thing more—his two gold dollars. These he tucked away in his sleeves, and started off.

No one noticed the hurrying little figure with the big bamboo basket until he turned into the poorer streets toward the north coast, when a group of untidy children gathered about him shouting, "Oh, Johnny Ching! Got washee? How muchee?" Some of the boldest nudged his elbow and poked their soiled fingers through the pretty pekin cover of his basket, but he took no notice, and bravely stifled the angry thoughts that would rise in spite of his errand. When he turned into the alley where the Armitages lived the crowd thinned to a few boys, and soon they also turned back, leaving him to go on in peace. He went to the basement door

and rang the bell. The door was opened by a tall, pale-faced man, who looked at the little visitor so sharply that Laong quite forgot the "Melly Klismas" he had intended to say. "You've made a mistake," the man said, looking down at his basket. "Try somewhere else," and was about to shut the door, when Laong asked:

"Sick boy here?"

"Yes, what of him?"

Laong held out his basket, smiling cheerfully. "That for him."

"Who sent you?" Mr. Armitage asked.

"The kind Jesus," answered Laong.

"You mistake," repeated the man, "but you may come in and see my son."

Laong followed him through the dark hallway into a bare little room where the sick boy sat propped up by pillows. Beside him, on the floor, sat a little girl, cutting paper dolls and toys to amuse him. She looked up with a smile of recognition. "Why, that's the boy that helped me the other day," she cried.

Laong placed the basket on the table, and turned to the boy. "You velly bad sick?" he asked, sympathetically. He took the gold pieces from his sleeves and dropped them into the thin little hand, saying, "From the good Jesus."

Then Dick turned to his mother, and said: "Oh, mother, isn't God good to send us this just when we need it so much?"

There were tears of joy in Mrs. Armitage's eyes as she took the little brown hand in hers and said,

"You've not only helped us in bodily things, but have taught us to trust God more fully. God bless you."

Laong smiled brightly, conscious of having served the Lord he loved. He ran down the alleyway, his little slippered feet twinkling in the sunshine. At the avenue crossing a hand was laid on his shoulder and a voice said: "Merry Christmas, Laong! And how do you like Christmas?"

"Much! How you like it, Mr. Lessing?"

"I never had a better. Glad yours has been fine. By the way, the schoolhouse was so much injured by the fire next door that the walls are thought unsafe. I am afraid we'll have to stop school for a week, or perhaps a month, unless they can get as many workmen as they want right off. Mind you don't forget all your lessons."

"Oh, no, Mr. Lessing, I not forget. But, Mr. Lessing, I know one velly poor man what have no work for velly long time, and no moneys and sick boy. Why not you let him work there, please?"

* * * * * *

At the end of the week Laong's father passed the church during the meeting, and stopped to hear the singing. In the course of the worship a man rose and said: "I must tell you, friends and brothers, how God rebuked unbelief and complaining by sending help in time of need." Then followed the simple story of Laong's deed of love, and how by the child's effort he had received work and his family been placed above want and misery.

Tao's heart swelled with pride and tenderness; and at the end of the services, for the first time in his life, he bowed his head in devout prayer to the God of his little son Laong.

WHEN SANTA CLAUS WAS ILL

OLD Father Time, on Christmas Eve,
Said anxiously, "I do believe
That Father Christmas will be late,
He ought to start, it's half-past eight
At midnight he is due on earth,
He'll have to rush for all he's worth,
It is a shame, upon my word!" —
Just then the telephone was heard.
"Hello," said Time. "Hello, who's this?"
"A messenger from Father Kris,
He has a bad attack of gout
And won't be able to go out,
And so he hopes you can supply
A substitute for him. Good-bye."

"I feared that this would come to pass,
For Father Christmas has grown old
And cannot stand the frost and cold.
But to the waiting human race
I must send some one in his place,
I'd go myself if 'twas not now

My busiest day, I don't see how
I can be spared, 'tis almost nine."
Ting-ting! "Hello, St. Valentine!"
"Who's this?" "I'm Time." "Hello, hello,
Christmas is ill, so can't you go
And take his place on earth to-night?
You're just about his size and height,
The difference none would ever know,
Come, hurry up, old chap, and go."

"I can't," St. Valentine replied,
"I've caught a cold, and then beside
I'm very busy writing lines
And making up my Valentines.
I'm sorry, Father Time, but I
Can't go, get some one else. Good-bye."
Then Father Time was very vexed,
Fourth of July he called up next,
But that young urchin laughed in glee,
And said, "No Christmases for me;
Too well my face each youngster knows,
Besides, I have no winter clothes."

"I'll go," the little New Year said,
Time patted the small curly head,
And kindly said, "No, boy, not so,
But next week, Sunday, you may go."
And just then April Fool came by
With mischief in his twinkling eye,
He heard the trouble, and said he,
"Why, Father Time, I'll go, send me,

I know the customs of old Yule.
I'll wear a long white beard and wig,
And make myself look old and big,
And do the best I can for you."

As there was nothing else to do
Old Time was forced to give consent,
And to the April Fool he lent
Old Father Christmas' robe and cap.
Arrayed in these the merry chap
Was sure he'd fool the wisest folk.
And went off chuckling at the joke.
He reached the earth just at the time
The bells rang out their midnight chime,
And through the whole of Christmas Day
That tricky April Fool held sway.
He thought up all that he could plan
To tease the heart of mortal man.

Instead of snow and frost and storm
The weather was quite mild and warm,
The fields were gay with budding flowers,
The clouds gave hints of April showers,
Instead of Christmas songs all day
They heard the street hand-organs play,
The children who had hoped to see
A Spruce or Hemlock Christmas Tree
Discovered in the best front room
A Peach or Cherry Tree in bloom.
Even the candies were no good,
Just cotton, wool, or bits of wood,
And somehow no one thought it droll

To find salt in the sugar bowl.
He mixed up all the children's toys,
Gave drums to girls and dolls to boys,
He gaves the ladies pipes and canes,
And to the men, fans and gold chains,
Gave specks to babies in long frocks,
And to their grandpas, building blocks,
Until each woman, man and child
With indignation went quite wild,
But never did they know or guess
Why Christmas wasn't a success.
And mischief-loving April Fool
Laughed at the topsy-turvy Yule.

SLY SANTA CLAUS

By permission of "The Christian Weekly," Louisville, Ky.

ALL the house was asleep,
And the fire burning low,
When, from far up the chimney,
Came down a "Ho! ho!"
And a little, round man,
With a terrible scratching,
Dropped into the room
With a wink that was catching.
Yes, down he came, bumping,
And thumping, and jumping,
And picked himself up without sign of a bruise!

"Ho! ho!" he kept on,
As if bursting with cheer.
"Good children, gay children,
Glad children, see here!
I have brought you fine dolls,
And gay trumpets, and rings,
Noah's arks, and bright skates,
And a host of good things!
I have brought a whole sackful,
A packful, a hackful!
Come hither, come hither, come hither and
choose!

"Ho! ho! What is this?
Why, they all are asleep!
But their stockings are up,
And my presents will keep!
So, in with the candies,
The books, and the toys;
All the goodies I have
For the good girls and boys.
I'll ram them, and jam them,
And slam them, and cram them;
All the stockings will hold while the tired
youngsters snooze."

All the while his round shoulders
Kept ducking and ducking;
And his little, fat fingers
Kept tucking and tucking;
Until every stocking
Bulged out, on the wall,

As if it were bursting,
And ready to fall.
And then, all at once,
With a whisk and a whistle,
And twisting himself
Like a tough bit of gristle,
He bounced up again,
Like the down of a thistle,
And nothing was left but the prints of his shoes.

MRS. S. C. STONE

THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN THE NURSERY

By permission of "The Independent," New York

WITH wild surprise
Four great eyes
In two small heads,
From neighboring beds
Looked out—and winked—
And glittered and blinked
At a very queer sight
In the dim starlight.
As plain as can be

A fairy tree
Flashes and glimmers
And shakes and shimmers.
Red, green and blue

Meet their view;
Silver and gold
Their sharp eyes behold;
Small moon, big stars;
And jams in jars,
And cakes, and honey
And thimbles, and money,
Pink dogs, blue cats,
Little squeaking rats,
And candles, and dolls,
And crackers, and polls,
A real bird that sings,
And tokens and favors,
And all sorts of things
For the little shavers.

Four black eyes
Grow big with surprise;
And then grow bigger
When a tiny figure,
Jaunty and airy,
(Is it a fairy?)
From the tree-top cries,
"Open wide! Black Eyes!
Come, children, wake now!
Your joys you may take now!"

Quick as you can think
Twenty small toes
In four pretty rows,
Like little piggies pink,

All kick in the air —
And before you can wink
The tree stands bare!

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

OF all the old festivals, that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. There is a tone of solemn and sacred feeling that blends with our conviviality, and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment.

It is a beautiful arrangement, derived from days of yore, that this festival, which commemorates the announcement of the religion of peace and love, has been made the season for gathering together of family connections, and drawing closer again those bands of kindred hearts which the cares, and pleasures, and sorrows of the world are continually operating to cast loose; of calling back the children of a family, who have launched forth in life, once more to assemble about the paternal hearth, there to grow young and loving again among the endearing mementoes of childhood.

There is something in the very season of the year that gives a charm to the festivity of Christmas. In the depth of winter, when Nature lies despoiled of her charms, wrapped in her shroud of sheeted snow, we turn for our gratifications to moral sources.

Heart calleth unto heart, and we draw our pleasures from the deep wells of living kindness which lie in the quiet recesses of our bosoms.

Amidst the general call to happiness, the bustle of the spirits and stir of the affections, which prevail at this period, what bosom can remain insensible? It is indeed the season of regenerated feeling —the season for kindling not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart. He who can turn churlishly away from contemplating the felicity of his fellow beings and can sit down repining in loneliness, when all around is joyful, wants the genial and social sympathies which constitute the charm of a merry Christmas.

WASHINGTON IRVING

CHRISTMAS DAY

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

NOW, chile, go hang yo' stockin's high
Dyar by de chimbly place,
'Fo' Santa Clause goes ridin' by
Wid him ole jolly face,
Dat's allus smilin' 'cause, dey say,
He lubs de chillun so,
An' brings dem gif's each Christmas Day
Across de miles ob snow.

I's mended dem from top to toe,
  Dey'l hole de t'ings yo' need,
One li'le garden rake an' hoe,
  De book yo' longs to read,
Wid fife an' drum fo' yo' to play;
  Dat Santa Clause boun' know
De t'ings yo's prayed fo' ebery day
  An' make yo' happy so.

Hang up yo' stockin's den an' rest
  He' in yo' little bed,
Jes laik de birdies in de nest
  De mammy bird hab fed,
Till jingle, jingle, in de mawn,
  When all de bells will say:
"De holy Chile ob Gawd am bawn
  An' dis am Christmas Day."

RUTH RAYMOND.

THE LITTLE FELLER'S STOCKIN'

From "Cape Cod Ballads and Other Verse," by permission of Albert Brandt, Trenton, N. J.

'TIS Christmas Eve, and moonlight, and the Christmas air is chill,
And the frosty Christmas holly shines and sparkles on the hill;
And the Christmas sleigh-bells jingle and the Christmas laughter rings,

As the last stray shoppers hurry, takin' home the
Christmas things;
And up yonder in the attic there's a little trundle
bed
Where there's Christmas dreams a-dancin' through
a sleepy curly head;
And it's "Merry Christmas," Mary, once agin fer
me and you,
With the little feller's stockin' hangin' up beside
the flue.

'Tisn't silk, that little stockin', and it isn't much
fer show,
And the darns are pretty plenty 'round about the
heel and toe,
And the color's kind er faded, and it's sorter worn
and old,
But it really is surprisin' what a lot of love 'twill
hold;
And the little hand that hung it by the chimney
there along
Has a grip upon our heartstrings that is mighty
firm and strong;
So old Santy won't fergit it, though it isn't fine and
new,—
That plain little worsted stockin' hangin' up beside
the flue.

And the crops may fail and leave us with our plans
all knocked ter smash,
And the mortgage may hang heavy, and the bills
use up the cash,

But whenever comes the season, jest so long's we've
got a dime,
There'll be somethin' in that stockin'—won't there,
Mary?—every time.
And if in amongst our sunshine there's a shower or
two of rain,
Why, we'll face it bravely smilin', and we'll try not
ter complain,
Long as Christmas comes and finds us here together,
me and you,
With the little feller's stockin' hangin' up beside
the flue.

JOE LINCOLN

GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

By permission of "Judge," New York

THE rattle of the coaches say
"I'm going, going home to-day."
December blooms as blithe as May;
The wind's shriek is a roundelay,
"I'm going, going home to-day,
Going home for Christmas."

The snowflakes dance and cry "Hurray!
He's going, going home to-day."
The skies are blue, or skies are gray,
And life is work, or life is play;
Who cares? I'm going home to-day,
Going home for Christmas.

My foot beats time, my pulses play
"I'm going, going home to-day."
Care turns her back and speeds away,
Love smiles upon me light and gay;
I'm going, going home to-day,
Going home for Christmas.

Oh, fate may bring me bells, or bay,
But I—I'm going home to-day.
And fortune say me yea, or nay,
And fame deny me, or delay,
But mistletoe and holly say
"I'm going, going home to-day,
Going home for Christmas."

MRS. MAGUIRE—A CHRISTMAS GIFT

By permission of the Author

SURE, it's not the fine 'ating, and such, makes me gay,
Now that Chris'mas has come 'round again;
But it's thoughts of one present of last Chris'mas day,
That makes me the happiest of men.
It was then I kept company, steady, with Kate,
Who "lived out" at Smith's over here;
And I went 'round as usual and knocked at the gate,
On the night before Chris'mas, last year.

'O!" says Katie, says she, as she opened the gate,
"Sure, I'm glad it's yourself, Pat Maguire."
So we set and we talked till it got mortial late,
In the glow of the warm kitchen fire.
At last, though I felt kind o' weak at the heart,
I tried hard for to swally me fear,
And I told her I'd bought her a fine horse and cart,
On the night before Chris'mas last year.

"Why," says Katie, "what good is such things to me, Pat?"
Faith, I never could tell how I got the words out.
But I looked down at Katie, and says, "As for that,
You will nade them both, Katie, to run me milk route."
"If I run your milk route," and her eyes sought the floor,
"Sure, I'll have to take you for to help me, Pat, dear."
She's my Chris'mas gift now, for it's married we were,
On the night after Chris'mas, last year.

THOMAS A. DALY

TURNED OUT

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

"JOSEPH."
"Yes, aunt?"
The kettle steamed vigorously over the fire.

Dick, the cat, purred on the braided rug before the stove. Everything spoke of peace and contentment; of rest, blessed rest, after the toil of the day. Upon this was Joseph's mind dwelling as he settled himself in his easy chair and lifted his carpet-slippered feet to his favorite attitude.

"Joseph," said his aunt, never lifting her eyes from her work, while the deep-set lines about her mouth grew deeper and firmer, "I have decided to get on alone this winter."

There, it was out! The old woman's rocker increased the cadence of its creaking, but still she kept her eyes upon her knitting.

As for Joseph, the look of astonishment, then consternation, that came over his face was pitiful to see. He brought down his feet from their place of ease, half turned in his chair till he could see his aunt's rigid expression, and exclaimed in a voice in which all the trouble of his face was reproduced: "Alone? why, aunt, what have I done? Ain't I 'tended to the wood, and ain't I helped you wash, and ain't I done everything for yer that I could? Be yer sick of seein' me 'round? Why, aunt," his voice broke as his eyes filled, "why, aunt, I didn't know I wasn't a-pleasin' yer."

The cadence of the chair increased yet again, and Mary waited a moment before answering. "'Tain't you, Joe," she said, finally; "it's me, I guess. But I tell yer, Joe, I've been thinking it over all summer, and if I am an old woman I ain't quite laid on the shelf yet, and I ain't a-goin' to be, neither."

As she talked, her feelings overcame her timidity

of speech, and now she set forth her views with the pent-up feelings of ten months. "No, sir! I ain't quite bed-ridden yet. Here I've been a-runnin' this house for forty years, and never a day but what I was glad there wa'n't no man botherin' 'round. Who dug the garding and planted it, year in an' year out, before you came? I did. Who threw in the wood an' piled it up in the shed every fall? I did. Who's drawed the water a pail at a time all these years, and who even laid the shingles on the ell an' barn ten years ago? I did. I did, Joe Gerrish, and you know it. Now do you think I'm a-goin' to see my home taken right out of my hands an' me a-dependin' on somebody else? Well, I ain't."

"But the 'rangement, auntie, the 'rangement," said Joe, grasping like a drowning man at the only straw in sight; "you know the 'rangement was that I do the work around, and make my home here the rest of my days, and that some time, some time when you get through, aunt, I was a-goin' to have the place. Wa'n't that the understandin', Aunt Mary?"

"Providin', Joe, providin' that at the end of a year everything was satisfactory. Wa'n't that what I said? Didn't you agree to that, now? Tell me, now, didn't you agree to it?"

"Yes, I agreed to it, aunt, I agreed to it; but I never once 'spected yer wa'n't satisfied with me. I've tried awful hard to please yer, aunt. I've done all I could to spare yer; I've scrubbed and dug, and dug and scrubbed. Why, aunt, it's a-comin' on

winter and there's the paths to shovel and the well to dig out, and you know how the snow always drifts up against the door?"

"That'll do, Joe, that'll do. Ain't I shoveled down them drifts for nigh onto forty year, an' ain't I dug out that well many a time? I tell yer I won't give up if I am over eighty years old. I guess I ain't got the old Stover blood in my veins for nothin'! It ain't you, Joe; you've done well enough, that is, well enough for a man; but I've lived alone for a good spell and I ain't goin' to give up yet. Yer needn't hurry 'bout makin' 'rangements 'bout a boardin' place if yer don't want to, but as soon as yer do get out I want to clean the room and shut it up for the winter. I know yer've tried, Joe, but a man does make a powerful lot o' dirt 'round. Sort o' seems to be their natur's."

Turned out! Joe looked around at the homely, old-fashioned furniture of the kitchen, at the splintered wood-box he had filled so often, at the stove he had so skilfully mended, and thereby given a long, new lease of life.

Turned out! His eye caught sight of the big, round face of the clock he had wound every Sunday morning just after breakfast. He had never noticed before that the clock could talk, but the measured tick of the pendulum, as it swung to and fro, seemed to echo the words of his brain, "turned—out, turned—out, turned—out."

Oh, but it was hard to be turned out now! Not but that he could continue to do odd jobs and so earn a living from the more pretentious neighbors;

his services were always in demand. But the old house had become home to him. To sit down at night and draw off his heavy boots, put on his warm, roomy slippers, and after supper, with Dick on his knees or close beside him, think over his thoughts in quiet, was joy enough and to spare.

"Turned out, turned out," whistled the November wind as it rattled the window and shook the shutters, and in its troubled sleep that night, the gray head turned on the pillow and the bearded lips muttered again and again: "turned out, turned out."

December came. It was a hard month. Great storms piled the streets, and country, city, and shipping suffered. Christmas for Joe Gerrish, had he been a different man, would have had little of cheer and much of bitter memory. But in his one little room he kept his diminutive stove fiercely going, and before it he rubbed his hands gleefully. "A snug little harbor, a snug little harbor," he repeated over and over again.

To see this room without its occupant was to see a room, habitable, but very cheerless. But to see it on that Christmas night, with the gray-headed man sitting contentedly before the glowing stove, was to see it transformed. The peaceful patience of that face was more than the touch of art to any room, and in its presence the bare walls and floor, the cracked window glass and poor furniture were forgotten.

Once he had gone to the old house in the early morning after a big storm and begun to shovel away the snow, hoping to have it done and get away un-

observed by his aunt, but scarcely had he shoveled a foot, before a window went up, and a familiar voice bade him to "Get out and let her alone," and he had "got out," and ever since had stayed away. Neighbors noticed the forlorn-looking old woman shoveling away alone, but no one knew the battle that proud spirit was fighting against bodily weakness, and no one, much less Joe, realized how in her heart she longed for the strong arm of him who had been the only helper she had known in forty years. It wasn't quite as she thought it would be—not quite what it was before Joe came.

The cry of fire and the bright glare of the blaze brought Joe into the street with all the speed he could muster. The fire was near, and Mary's house might be in danger. This was his one thought. No remembrance that he had been told to "get out," and hurrying along the street he reached the corner just in time to see Hose Four come dashing up with the chief.

Millions of sparks were joining the myriad stars in the heavens and floating swiftly off, bright and beautiful agents of terror and destruction. The fire was in a large, costly stable, and had spread to the house, and though the chief was everywhere present with words of encouragement and advice, in half an hour three houses had gone, and the fire was still spreading.

How they worked, those monster engines! How they snorted and shook and spit fire as they sucked up every well and cistern in the street, and at last, when the water was almost gone, the fire was known

to be under control. All eyes were on the men at the pipes and on the ladders, but in the next street no one saw the desperate battle for a home, for a little, old, weather-beaten house that would have hardly received mention in the morning papers. In her little yard over in Dutton Street, old Mary Stover was alternately drawing pail after pail of water, throwing it as high as possible (which was hardly above the windows) and wringing her hands in despair, when around the corner of the house burst Joe, his hat gone and coat open to the wind. Without a minute's hesitation he forced in the shed door, pulled out the old ladder and mounted to the roof. Already the shingles were burning in a dozen places, and as Mary drew the water and passed it, Joe threw it right and left. Few roofs caught, for nearly all in the neighborhood were slated, and the wind seemed to single out the little old house with its cedar shingles for its especial prey. Faster and faster fell the glowing embers, and where they touched, tiny, swiftly-spreading flames sprang up. The old man's knees were growing lame and weak; his soaking clothes froze and his hands blistered as with them, while waiting for water, he smothered the fire here and there. At last the water ceased to come, and looking down he saw Mary sitting exhausted by the well. Her strength had failed at last and she could do no more. Not a word had passed between them since he came, and of their past differences neither had a thought.

Clambering quickly down he took the exhausted woman in his arms and carried her into the house,

then, hurrying out again, drew each pail of water himself, and climbing up the ladder, threw it about on the roof. But, thank heaven! the worst was over, and the dear old house was safe.

The old man wet the last glowing shingle, then slowly and painfully felt his way down from round to round and stood shivering in the snow, looking at the door in indecision.

Then he tottered into the kitchen and lay down. Dick crept up to him with an appreciative purr and rubbed his nose against the old man's face, while the blistered and blackened hand came up and stroked him, and then Joe knew no more.

When he woke it was to find himself on the familiar horsehair sofa, with blankets tucked in about him, and Mary kneeling beside him with tears streaming down her wrinkled cheeks.

"Oh, Joe, will you stay now? I'm so sorry! I'm only an old woman, Joe; will you stay now?"

"Why, aunt," answered Joe, "why, aunt, it's good of you to take me in. 'Course I'll stay."

And the big clock ticked its measured strokes, but now it said: "Tucked-in," "tucked-in."

FRANK HAZLEWOOD ROWE

A BALLADE OF OLD LOVES

From "Idle Idyls," by permission of Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York

WHO is it stands on the polished stair,
A merry, laughing, winsome maid,
From the Christmas rose in her golden hair

To the high-heeled slippers of spangled suède?
A glance, half daring and half afraid,
Gleams from her roguish eyes downcast;
Already the vision begins to fade—
'Tis only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

Who is it sits in that high-backed chair,
Quaintly in ruff and patch arrayed,
With a mockery gay of a stately air
As she rustles the folds of her old brocade,—
Merriest heart at the masquerade?
Ah, but the picture is passing fast
Back to the darkness from which it strayed—
'Tis only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

Who is it whirls in a ball-room's glare,
Her soft white hand on my shoulder laid,
Like a radiant lily, tall and fair,
While the violins in the corner played
The wailing strains of the Serenade?
Oh, lovely vision, too sweet to last—
E'en now my fancy it will evade—
'Tis only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

L'ENVOI.

Rosamond! look not so dismayed,
All of my heart, dear love, thou hast
Jealous, beloved? Of a shade?—
'Tis only a ghost of a Christmas Past.

CAROLYN WELLS

CHREES'MAS TIME

By permission of the Author

"CHREES'MAS time ees vera funna!
I no feel dees way bayfore.
I gon' out an' spenda mona
Teel I no gat any more.
Jus' blowed dollar'n half for Rosa —
Dollar'n half for buy a ring!
All for her! I no supposa
She gon' geev me anyt'ing.
Chrees'mas mak' your heart so tender
Like a snowball wenn eet melts;
You no care how mooch you spenda
Jus' for pleasin' some wan else.
Dat'sa way dees Chrees'mas fever
Catcha me. I got eet bad!
I no care how mooch I geev her,
Jus' so long eet mak' her glad.
I no want her geev me notting;
I gon' mak' dees praisant free,
Jus' baycausa Rosa tol' me
She gon' marry weetha me.
Chrees'mas time ees vera funna!
I no feel dees way bayfore.
I gon' out an' spenda mona
Teel I no gat any more."

THOMAS A. DALY

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By permission of "Pall Mall Gazette," London, England

THE trees are hung with crystal lamps, the wold
lies still and white,
And the myriad little twinkling stars are sharp with
keener light;
The moon sails up the frost-clear sky and silvers all
the snow,
As she did, perchance, that Christmas night, two
thousand years ago!

Good people, are you waking?
Give us food and give us wine,
For the sake of blessed Mary
And her Infant Son Divine,
Who was born the world's Redeemer —
A Saviour—yours and mine!

Long ago angelic harpers sang the song we sing to-
day,
And the drowsy folk of Bethlehem may have listened
as they lay!
But eager shepherds left their flocks, and o'er the
desert wild
The kingly sages journeyed to adore the Holy Child!

Has any man a quarrel?
Has another used you ill?
The friendly word you meant to say,
Is that unspoken still? —
Then, remember, 'twas the Angels
Brought glad tidings of good will!

Of all the gifts of Christmas, are you fain to win the best?
Lo! the Christ-child still is waiting Himself to be your quest;
No lot so high or lowly but He will take His part,
If you do but bid Him welcome to a clean and tender heart.

Are you sleeping, are you waking?
To the Manger haste away,
And you shall see a wond'rous sight
Amid the straw and hay.—
'Tis Love Himself Incarnate
As on this Christmas Day!

CHRISTIAN BURKE

WHEN ELIZABETH WENT HOME

By permission of "McClure's Magazine," New York

IT was only five o'clock, but the wide, far-stretching prairie lay swathed in twilight, and the scene was unspeakably dreary to Elizabeth as she stood gazing out into the deepening dusk.

"At home," she mused, and the word vibrated in her mind with an aching tenderness, "the electric lights are gleaming along the streets, the trolley cars are full of happy Christmas shoppers. Papa has come in now and hurries off to his room with various mysterious bundles; Alice and Dick are hobnobbing together in a corner over mamma's pres-

ent. After dinner, some of the crowd will come in and there will be music and dancing, then later a jolly little supper around the chafing-dish."

She turned from her thoughts to the gray stretch outside. "Snow, stillness—country, country, country! I hate it! I like noise and lights and good times and people! Oh, I want to go home! I want to go home!"

Her husband was coming now. Stamping the snow from his feet he entered the warm room. "It's awfully cold outside," he remarked. The wife made no response, and the man said no more until she summoned him to the evening meal. Then he ventured, "It doesn't seem possible that day after tomorrow is Christmas, does it?"

"Please don't remind me of it, Robert," she cried sharply. The man winced and put down his coffee-cup. Suddenly he gave his shoulders an energetic little shake. "Elizabeth," he said, "let's hurry and get through, then we can spend the evening packing your trunk, for you must start home in the morning. You will arrive Christmas afternoon, in time for most of the festivities, and you can stay just as long as you like."

Elizabeth looked at him with startled eyes. "What do you mean?" she asked, "you know very well ——"

"Just this, dear ——" broke in the man, "you must take the seventy five dollars we saved to get new machinery in the spring. I'll manage about that somehow."

"Why—why, I couldn't do that," stammered

Elizabeth, but with hope mounting in her heart, "I won't do it."

"Oh, yes, you will," he replied. "I think I can get the machinery somehow, but we won't talk about that now. Nothing matters except for my sad little girl to find her happy heart again."

"Oh, Robert, you're so good, so good! And what a poor wife I am! So selfish and unkind to you! But, Robert, you can't understand. You can't realize how I ache to go home. The snow and stillness and bigness of everything gets on my nerves. It wasn't so bad in the early summer when the woolly buffalo grass was so soft and pretty, and the sky was so blue; and when mamma and Alice were here, it was fine, but, oh, this winter——! And we've been married a year and a half, and I've never been home once! When we planned to go this Christmas, I was so happy, and then things went wrong and we couldn't afford it. Oh, Robert, I know I oughtn't to go, but I do want to! But I won't stay long, and when I come back I'll be the best wife in the world!"

So it was settled. The pretty trousseau, almost unworn, was prepared for the Eastern journey. Early the next day they drove over to the nearest town, where Elizabeth was to take the east-bound train. To their dismay, they learned that the train was two hours late.

"Robert, you need not wait. There are so many things you ought to do back at the house. I'll telegraph home. It will help to pass the time."

"Very well, dear. And here's a note I wrote

you last night; I was rather wakeful. Read it some time on the way. Good-bye, then; have a good time and be happy. Good-bye."

Elizabeth went back into the station and sat down. There was only one other person in the room, a gaunt, flat-chested German woman. Then Elizabeth tore open her note and read:

"This is only a few words to bid my little wife Godspeed, and say a few other things that I want to say now while I see them clearly. It has come upon me lately that I have wronged you in bringing you to this lonely place. My boyhood was passed in the country and I love it, and you, catching a little of the enthusiasm, were willing to come. So I refused the kind offer of your Uncle Henry. The stifling round of the office fevers me. But you were made for the easier, more sparkling life of the city, and the happiness of you is the happiness of me, so if your uncle's offer is still open to me, I will accept it, if you so desire. But if you could find it in your heart to give this life a few more months' trial, I feel sure the crops this year will be as good as they were poor last year, and then we could make this home more like your old one. But if you feel that you do not wish to make the trial, then say so, and your wish shall be my wish. Have a happy visit, and God keep you."

Elizabeth's tears fell on the note before she had finished. "There is not another in the world so good as Robert," she thought; "I won't try to decide now about the farm, I'll wait till I get home. I'd better telegraph now."

She turned toward the little room where the operator sat, and then hesitated; somehow the keen edge of her eagerness was dulled. The home vision was not so radiant as it had seemed. She remembered her brother Dick and his friends, with their well-groomed persons, their polished flippancy, and then she thought of Robert in his worn ulster, his cheeks glowing from the wind of the prairie; but with loneliness in his sober eyes. She drew her hand across her forehead with a gesture of trouble and dissatisfaction, and then her eyes fell upon the old German woman on the other bench. A dull, colorless creature she was, who might have been anywhere between twenty-five and forty. One would hardly have noticed her a second time, but for the expression of grief that dignified her unlovely face. Every once in a while a tear fell from her eyes, and rolled down her faded cheeks. Elizabeth, always tender-hearted in the presence of suffering, walked over to her. "Is there anything I can do for you?" she asked timidly.

"Nobody can't do nottings," replied the woman. "My man been dead."

"Oh," said Elizabeth, helplessly, "I'm sorry. Has he been dead long?"

The woman moved over for Elizabeth to sit beside her, and began to talk eagerly. It was a relief to pour out some of the trouble in her heart to this kindly stranger.

"No, miss; one week he has been dead. Ten years Chris and me's been married. Chris hadn't no learning, but he was good looking, yes. I had

learning. I could read and some I could write. I worked in the canning factory mit Gussie and Tina, and lots of other girls, and sooch fun we been having. Then 'long come Chris and asked me won't I marry mit him, and I did. But he ain't high-toned like me, and he want to have a farm, and we did come way out here. But I never did like it, no. It sads me to hear the wolves in the night-time, and everything is that still! And I don't like never to see nobody. I want to see Tim and Gussie and work in the canning factory again already, and I ask him to go, but he say no. And I sass him and sass him, and he don't say mooch, and never don't beat me, and now he been dead, my man been dead." Her stooped shoulders shook with sobs.

"And now what are you going to do?" asked Elizabeth, huskily.

"I'm going to try to get into the canning factory again already. But I don't want to work in the canning factory, no. I want to live out on the prairie mit Chris. It wouldn't sad me no more. Mein Gott, I been one fool! Wolves don't matter. Never seein' nobody don't matter. Nothin' matter but your man!"

Elizabeth rose and grasped the woman's hand. The light that never was on sea or land was in her eyes. "Yes, you're right. Nothing matters but your man. Thank you! And good-bye!"

It was Christmas Eve. Robert sat alone in the little house and looked into the fire. The hook where Elizabeth's jacket had hung was empty.

Her little overshoes were gone, too. He dared not turn his eyes in that direction. Suddenly he bowed his head in his hands. "I am a failure," he said bitterly. "I have failed with the farm. I have failed with Elizabeth." Tears fell upon his tanned cheeks—not the quick, bright tears of childhood, but the awful tears of manhood that start in the deeps of the heart and come by a slow, burning pathway to the eyes.

Then Elizabeth came.

Her cheeks glowed, and her eyes were dazzling lovelights. "Oh, Robert," she cried, "I couldn't go. I couldn't endure Christmas without you. And of course we'll try Dakota a little longer—forever, if you like. I shall never hate it again, for—'nothing matters but your man.'"

ETHEL BOWMAN RONALD

HOW THE CHRIST-FLOWER BLOOMED

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

DARK was the sky that Christmas Eve,
The heavy clouds hung low;
The charcoal burner scarce could trace
His pathway through the snow.

Black Forest trees stood thick and tall,
Black Forest drifts were deep;

Yet, light of heart, he hastened home,
The Christmas Feast to keep.

He stumbled on, when through the blast
A piteous cry was heard,
And close beside him, heaped in snows,
A wailing infant stirred.

"Now who has laid thee here, sweet babe,
To perish in the storm?
'Tis Christmas Eve; I'll take thee home,
My cloak shall wrap thee warm."

The tiny creature, as he spoke,
He gathered to his breast,
And there beyond, his cottage shone,
In Christmas firelight dressed.

Within the good-wife's tender arms
The shivering waif was set,
And children's faces bent above,
And eyes with pity wet.

Warm and content, the stranger babe
Gazed wondering o'er the room,
And spied at last the children's tree,
A Christmas rose in bloom.

Eager they ran to show the lights,
And round their treasure pressed;
When lo! a glimmering cloud of mist
Enwrapped the wondrous guest.

On silver-shining wings he rose,
His fair head bore a crown,
And vanishing, with baby hands
He wafted blessings down.

Next morning, where, amid the snows,
The Babe had made his bed,
Fair as a star, and dazzling white,
The Christ-flower raised its head.

They bore it home, and every year,
In depths of winter wild,
Within that cot chrysanthemums bloom
Where came the Holy Child.

NORA ARCHIBALD SMITH

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

By permission of the Author

ALMOST any man can say it,
Can say, "Baby, go to bed";
But how many can enforce it,
When a little tousle-head
Perks his head up sort of sideways
In the way we daddies know,
And says, half a smile, half fearful,
"Papa, me don't 'ants to doe."

And pleads, "Me ain't s'eepy, papa,
Me don't 'ants to doe to bed."
And you see the curls a-tumble
On the little baby head;
And you look up at his mother,
In a deprecating way,
And you hide behind your paper,
And you let the baby stay.

Yes, most any dad can say it,
Can say, "Baby, go to bed";
But how many can enforce it
When a little tousle-head
Says, "I'ms busy now a-watchin'
For Santa Claus; don't papa know?"
Smiling, "I'ms ain't s'eepy, papa,"
Pleading, "I'ms don't 'ants to doe."

JUDD MORTIMER LEWIS

CHRISTMAS, PRITHEE

By permission of "The Living Age" Co., Boston

CHRISTMAS, prithee, be thou drest
In thy best —
Snowy wimple, snowy gown —
Laying down
Flooring pure and white, to greet
Jesu's feet.
Gloria in Excelsis.

Bid thy frosty handmaids bear
Through the air
Cloth of silver, for thy veil
Clear and frail,
While the robins welcome sing
To thy king.
Gloria in Excelsis.

Angels o'er thy radiant brow
Leaning low,
Joyous, carol once again
Sweet refrain,
Seeing our dark earth so fair,
"Peace be there,
Gloria in Excelsis."

THE CHRISTMAS PEACEMAKER.

By permission of "New England Magazine," Boston

LIFE was a series of abbreviations to Lucinda Ellen, even to her name, which had been cut down to Cinders.

Time for Lucinda Ellen was a succession of weeks, filled in by blue Mondays, with no holidays, jolly Saturday afternoons or peaceful Sundays to leaven the lump. The world's population she insensibly divided into two classes, with one crowned head: boarders who paid, boarders who didn't, and Mrs. Stogers.

Six years before, Mrs. Stogers had taken the child

from one of those homes for orphans where all the little children wear clothes made of the same material, cut by one pattern; and six years—when a person is but thirteen—to look back upon is practically always. During that time Cinders had washed dishes, battled with dust, and run endless errands, on small, weary feet.

Love had never come her way. Yet it did not follow that because nobody loved Lucinda Ellen, she did not know what love was.

She had always loved something, if it had been only a rag doll, and upon this object, whatever it happened to be, showered a positively abject devotion. It was the way she was made. At present her heart's delight was a diminutive one-eyed cat. When night came, and the last dish had been shelved, the kitchen swept, and the stove garnished till it satisfied the soul of Hannah—Mrs. Stogers' prime minister, and, incidentally, cook—the child would go wearily up the many stairs to her own room under the roof with its tiny, slanting window looking upward at the stars. The cat always followed, and when Cinders curled herself up on the chair that stood beneath the window, he would spring to the back of it, and say, in his own fashion, all the nice things he could think of to the forlorn little maiden.

One evening she had come to her room very tired. It had been a Monday of deepest indigo, and the spirit of the child had rebelled against fate. A fierce hatred of Mrs. Stogers and Hannah possessed her, and filled her eyes with hot tears.

Suddenly there floated through the room a sound so sweet, so thrilling sweet, she sprang to her feet, clasping the cat tightly as a protection, for she was half afraid. Some one was playing on a violin, but that the child did not know, and a fancy floated over her that an angel had slipped down into Mrs. Stogers' attic on a bar of moonlight, and had brought his harp with him. The street-pianos were her chief joy, and a German band, no matter how broken-winded, had hitherto filled her with ecstasy; but this was different,—Mrs. Stogers' walls had never echoed to such sounds before. Cinders stole out into the hall and listened. The door of the next room whence the sound came was ajar, so she pushed it open quickly. A man stood there, his violin tucked under his chin. He stopped playing after a moment, and spoke to the child.

"Hello!" he said, smiling. "Who are you?"

"Cinders," she answered, drawing a long breath. "Oh, you do play lovely, sir!"

He laughed and began tuning his violin. "Come in, if you'd like to. I'll play again. It's refreshing to be appreciated. It's what we all want, don't you know, to be appreciated. Are you appreciated, little one?"

"No, sir," answered the child. "Oh, no, sir, I ain't."

"What a regular little witch! Is that your familiar spirit? Where did they ever get you?"

"From a home," answered Cinders. "An'—he ain't a spirit—he's a cat. An' I ain't a witch. I wish't I was; then I'd change Mrs. Stogers into a

cow, an' Hannah into a monkey, an' I'd turn things to gold, an' live in a castle; an' I'd never do anything but listen to music like you played, an' I'd have fairies bring me ice-cream on little trays every hour, an' I'd buy a real diamond collar for the cat, an' I'd marry a prince!"

"Where's your mother?" asked the man.

"I haven't any—nor a father—nor nobody."

"We're in the same boat, then," he answered. "I have an aunt, who thinks she owns me, body and soul."

"Like Mrs. Stogers does me?"

"Yes, probably. But this aunt of mine has a mortgage on me, unfortunately. I have lived with her. I owe her everything. She is still liberal. She says I may be rich, going her way, with the alternative of being poor, going my own. It can be seen which I have chosen. It was the one possible way; a man can't be browbeaten." He was talking to himself now.

"I must go," said Cinders. "Mrs. Stogers wouldn't let me be bothering you. Will you play some other time?"

"I will."

"Thank you, and good-night, sir."

The melody Cinders had heard sung itself to her till it put her to sleep.

Every evening before Dan Thorald went to the theatre to play, he played on the small brown instrument, and Cinders and the cat listened. When he returned, he stayed in his room writing, as though his life depended upon it. Cinders fretted

at the thought of him in the cold room, where he sat, his overcoat buttoned to his throat.

He finished his work and sent it away, then tried to put in the time practicing, but the weather was frosty, and his fingers could not handle the bow. Yet he was not without hope. If the opera he had sent was received, he would go home for Christmas victorious, and show the woman who thought she owned his destiny that he was able to do his own work in the world, in his own way. But what Thorald did not count upon was illness—that thief in the night.

One morning, two weeks before Christmas, he did not come down to breakfast, and Mrs. Stogers mounted the steep stairs to ascertain the reason. No answer was given to her knocking, so, the door being unlocked, she went in. Her lodger was tossing his head to and fro on the pillow. He called Mrs. Stogers "Aunt Emily," and she said afterward the way his eyes stared gave her chills, so she sent him to the hospital.

Cinders watched the ambulance take him away, then she rushed to her room and flung herself down on the floor. She did not cry, for it was past crying with Cinders. "If I knew where that old aunt lived, I'd find her," she said, sitting up and gazing with melancholy eyes at the cat. "There might be a letter or something in that leather case of his. I don't like lookin', but I guess I must."

She went into the deserted room, and in a fever of hope and fear she searched quickly. In a pocket of the dress-suit was a letter directed to "Miss Emily

Thorald." Then followed the name of a town Cinders had heard mentioned often, for it was not far away. "I'll write," she said, rejoicing in the accomplishment. "Yes, I'll write, an' get the money from my bank for the paper and stamps."

This bank was a tin building kept by Mrs. Stogers in her own room. Any coin of the realm that Cinders chanced to receive she was condemned to deposit therein. Now she abstracted this building from the site it had so long occupied, and shook out enough coppers to make her purchases, then wrote as follows: "Miss Emily Thorwald: Your nefu is took ill with a fit of sickness. If you don't come to him he will die. There ain't nobody cares if he does or not but me. He is at the Hospittle, and is out of his head. Hana says the Hospittle is orful. With respece, Lucinda Ellen."

This Cinders posted, and waited. More than a week went by. She escaped once and went to the hospital. The porter told her Thorald was very ill, and that no one had come to see him. She made up her mind on the way home that she would go for Thorald's aunt herself. There was a desperate pain at her heart that made inaction impossible.

About dusk she slipped out of the house, dressed in what Mrs. Stogers called her best clothes, the tin bank clasped to her breast. The cat followed, scenting adventure in the air. The city looked gay and bright. The great buildings were trimmed with the snow's ermine and the frost's lace, as in honor of the approaching feast-day. There was cedar before the shops and bunches of glistening holly behind the

windows. She passed butcher shops where rows and rows of turkeys, all butchered to make a Christmas holiday, and where pigs of cheerful countenance, adorned with paper roses, and holding lemons in their mouths, appeared to rejoice in their fate. On and on sped her light footsteps, for she knew the way. Silver sleigh-bells rang on the frosty air, but she did not know she heard them.

The man in the ticket-office at the station stared as she asked for her ticket and handed him the tin bank.

"Break it open," said Cinders, "and take out the money, please. I think there's enough. I tried to get it open, but I couldn't."

So far her faith in humanity had not been in error. The official wrenched the box open, took the needed amount, and handed back the rest with the ticket. People were all kind, she thought—the brakeman who helped her aboard the train, the conductor, all of them.

Perhaps it was because the Christmas spirit was abroad in the land, or else that the serious little face, framed in its bronze brown hair ; the tremulous red lips and eager, appealing eyes, were hard to resist.

The train sped on, and Cinders waited, the cat, who had escaped all pursuit, purring calmly beside her. When the station was reached, she went to the driver of an ancient cab and asked him if he could take her to Miss Thorald's house. "I want to get there very quickly," she said, "and here's the money," handing him the balance on hand.

"All right, lady," he answered; "get right in. Ye'll be there in a jiffy."

"If it had been daylight he wouldn't have called me that," thought the child. As to how she should return she did not trouble. No thought of Mrs. Stogers disturbed her. No fear, though the hour was late and the place strange. One idea alone held her mind.

After a little while the cab drew up before such a house as Cinders had seen in pictures. She went up the steps and pulled the great brass bell-knob. A stiff, wooden-looking man answered the door.

"I want Miss Thorald," Cinders said eagerly, "an' I want her at once, if you please."

The butler led her in and went for his mistress.

Cinders sprang to her with outstretched arms.

"Why didn't you come?" she cried reproachfully. "I told you how ill he was. Are you so angry you will let him die all alone?"

The woman grew white and caught her breath strangely. "I don't understand. Who are you, child? What have you come for?"

Little by little Cinders told her story—of the man in his attic room; of the music she loved; of the opera that had been sent away; of the cold days and nights. It was a childish tale, mixed in the telling, but the listener understood at last.

"If they took his opera in New York he was coming home for Christmas; when people are successful, they come home. When they ain't, why they don't," Cinders ended gravely.

"My proud boy," said the woman, her lips quivering; "my proud boy!"

Then she kissed Cinders.

"It was very queer to be kissed," Cinders thought, as she lay that night in a little white bed in one of the beautiful rooms. It had not been possible to reach the city till next morning. At noon Miss Thorald entered the white hospital ward and found the one she sought. But it was not that day that he knew her, nor the next. She listened to him talking—of the hours spent in the cold, lonely room—of his work—of Cinders, the only one who seemed to care, and she prayed as she listened.

As for Cinders, Miss Thorald kept the child with her; for there are ways of settling things when one has a friend rich and determined, and Cinders had found such a friend.

It was Christmas day that they went together into the ward where Dan Thorald lay. He would know them, the nurse said.

"Why, it's Cinders and Aunt Emily," he cried weakly, as they came near.

"I guess you don't know it's Christmas," said Cinders, with tear-filled eyes.

"Christmas! No, but I might have, I've got such a lot of presents—Aunt Emily, and you, little one, and this victorious letter from New York. Mrs. Stogers brought it. At first the nurse wouldn't let me read it, for fear excitement would kill me. I told her I'd die if she didn't. That ended it."

"Oh, I'm so glad, so glad," cried Cinders, clasping her hands.

"I knew I could count on you; but Aunt Emily, you won't mind if I go my own way—now? It will be a successful one."

"Go your own way, dear boy," she answered, softly, "I will follow. It is what women always do—in the end. I mind nothing—for I have you again—my Christmas gift—from God."

VIRNA SHEARD

SANTA CLAUS IN HOLLAND

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

NOW, children, listen to my tale—
Believe me, it is true;
When Santa Claus to Holland goes
He looks 'round for a shoe.

He finds it near the chimney, wide,
Where you a stocking hang;
And when the house is dark and still
Old Santa, with a bang,

Comes tumbling down into the room
Where Hans and Gretchen lie,
And looks 'round for the wooden shoes;
Soon as they meet his eye,

If Gretchen's words have gentle been
Through all the long year past;

If Hans has been a thoughtful boy,
Then Santa Claus will cast

Into each little wooden shoe
Knives, marbles, dolls and toys;
For, don't you see, he knows right well
What pleases girls and boys.

But if their words have angry been,
With quarrels not a few,
Ah, then old Santa leaves a whip
Within each wooden shoe!

So little Hans and Gretchen try
To be so good and kind,
That they shall never in their shoes
A whip, on Christmas, find.

HELEN M. RICHARDSON

CHRISTMAS GREETING

By permission of "School and Home Education," Bloomington, Ill.

WE hope your Christmas will be merry,
And each fare well by Santa Claus.
All care and trouble try to bury,
Let Joy and Pleasure be your cause.

Your presence gives us happy hearts,
The world is bright before us.
May life be full of cakes and tarts,
And all good things come o'er us.

CHRISTMAS EVE

By permission of "The Outlook," New York

OUTSIDE my window whirls the icy storm
And beats upon its panes with fingers white;
Within, my open fire burns bright and warm,
And sends throughout the room its ruddy light.

Low on the hearth my good grimalkin lies,
His supple, glossy limbs outstretched along;
Now gently sleeps with softly closèd eyes,
Now half awakened, purrs his evening song.

Near to the fire, touched by its gentle heat,
A silent, welcome friend, my armchair stands;
Its cushioned depths invite me to its seat,
And promise rest for weary head and hands.

Within its depths mine eyes unheeded close,
And comes to me a vision wondrous sweet.
Such sights and sounds no wakeful hours disclose
As then my resting, dreaming senses greet.

I am where gentle shepherds on the plain
Keep sleepless, faithful watch o'er resting sheep;
I hear them chant the psalmist's sweet refrain,
That Israel's God will sure His promise keep.

Then quick the air is full of heav'nly song,
And radiant light illumines all the ground,
While angel voices sweet the strain prolong,
And angel faces shine in glory round.

I see the shepherds' faces pale with fear,
  Then glow with joy and glad surprise, for then —
"Glory to God!" from angel lips they hear,
  And "Peace on earth, good will to men."

And then the light marks out a shining way,
  And swift the shepherds are the path to take.
I long to go: oh, laggard feet, why stay?
  Alas! the vision fades, and I awake.

Within, the smold'ring fire is burning dim;
  Without, the whirl and beat of storm have ceased.
I still can hear the angels' peaceful hymn,
  And know the vision hath my peace increased.

FRANK E. BROWN

CHRISTOBAL

By permission of Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co., Boston

LONG ago, in fair Burgundy, lived a lad named Christobal. His large dark eyes lay under the fringe of his lids, full of shadows; eyes as lustrous as purple amethysts, and alas! as sightless. He had not always been blind, as perhaps a wild and passionate lad, named Jasper, might have told you. On a certain Christmas Eve, long before, a merry boy was little Christobal, as he pattered along to church, trying with his wooden shoes to keep time to the dancing bells. In his hand he carried a

Christmas candle of various colors. Never, he thought, was a rainbow as exquisitely tinted as that candle. Carefully he watched it when it winked its sleepy eye, eagerly begging his mamma to snuff it awake again. How gayly the streets twinkled with midnight lanterns! And how mortifying to the stars to be outdone by such a grand illumination!

A new painting had just been hung in the church, called by the people The Holy Child, with an aureole about his head. Christobal looked at this picture with reverent delight; and, to his surprise, the Holy Child returned his gaze: wherever he went the sweet, sorrowful eyes followed him. There was a wondrous charm in that pleading glance. Why was it so wistful? What had those deep eyes to say?

The air was cloudy with the breath of frankincense and myrrh. Deep voices and the heavy organ sounded chants and anthems. There were hymns and prayers to the coming Messiah, but at last, the service was ended. Then, in tumult and great haste, the people went home for merry-makings. Christobal, eager to see what the Yule-log might have in store for him, rushed out of the church with careless speed, stumbling over a boy who stood in his way,—the haughty, insolent Jasper. Jasper's beautiful Christmas candle was cracked in twenty pieces by his fall.

"I'll teach you better manners, young peasant!" cried he, rushing upon Christobal in a frenzy, and dealing fierce blows without mercy or reason. It

was then that Christobal's eyes went out like falling stars. Their lustre and beauty remained; but they were empty caskets, their vision gone. Then followed terrible anguish; and all Christobal's mother could do was to hold her boy in her arms, and soothe him by singing. At last the fever was spent; but the pain still throbbed on, and sometimes seemed to burn into Christobal's brain. He cried out again and again, "What right had that fierce Jasper to spring upon me so? I meant him no harm; and he knew it. Oh, I would like to see him chained in a den! He is like the wicked people who are turned into wolves at Christmas-tide. I would cry for joy if I could hear him groan with such pain as mine!"

Poor Christobal never hoped to see again. He carried in his mind pictures of cities and hamlets, of trees, flowers, and old, familiar faces; but oftenest came Jasper's face, just as it had glared on him with bloodthirsty eyes. It was a terrible countenance. Only one charm could dispel the horror,—the remembrance of the beautiful Child in the church. That picture blotted out everything else. It was like the refrain in the Burgundian carols, "Noel, Noel," which comes again and again, and never tires.

A year passed. Christobal's mother only prayed now that her boy might suffer less: she had ceased to pray for the healing of his blindness.

Now it was Christmas-tide again. Ever since Advent, people had been singing carols. They roasted chestnuts, and chanted praises of the Mes-

siah, who was soon to come, bringing peace on earth, good-will to men. The children began to talk again of the Yule-log, and to wonder what gifts Noel would bring to place under each end of it; for these little folks, who have no stocking-saint like our Santa Claus, believe in another quite as good, who rains down sugar-plums in the night.

Everywhere there was a joyful bustle. Housewives were making ready their choicest dishes for the great Christmas supper; fathers were slyly peeping into shop windows, and children hoarding their sous and centimes for bonbons and comfits. Everybody was merry but Christobal; or so thought the lad. He had no money to spend, and little but pain for his holiday cheer. A patch here and there in his worn clothes was the best present his thrifty mother was able to make; always excepting the little variegated taper, which few were too poor to buy.

Christmas Eve came. Family friends dropped in. The Yule-log was set on the fire with shouts and singing. "Oh, that I could see these kind faces!" moaned Christobal. "No doubt Jasper's chestnuts are popping merrily; and his shoes will be full of presents. And here am I! My head aches, and my eyeballs burn!"

He stole out of the room, and, throwing himself on a wicker bench, mused over his troubles in solitude. One might have supposed him sleeping; for how should one imagine that his beautiful eyes were of no manner of use, except when they were closed? When Christobal said, "Let me see," he dropped

his eyelids; and what he saw then, no artist can paint.

On this night, a beautiful Child appeared before him, as like the picture of The Holy Child as if it had stepped out of its frame on the church-wall. "I saw you, Christobal, when you came before me with your colored candle, one year ago."

"I knew it, I knew it!" cried Christobal, clapping his hands in awe. "I saw your eyes follow me; and I never once turned but you were looking. They told me it was only a picture; but I said for that very reason your eyes were sorrowful,—you longed to be alive."

The Child replied by a slight motion of the head; and the aureole trembled like sunlight on the water. The longer Christobal gazed, the more courage he gathered. "Lovely vision," said he, "if vision you may be,—I have said to myself, I would gladly walk to Rome with peas in my shoes, if I could know what you wished to say to me that night."

"Only this, little brother: Are you ready for Christmas?"

"Alas, no! I never am. I have only two sous in the world."

"Poor Christobal! Yet without a centime, one may be ready for Christmas."

"But I am so very unhappy!"

"You do indeed look sad, little brother: where is your pain?"

"In my eyes," moaned the boy, pouring out the words with a sense of relief, for he was sure they dropped into a pitying heart. "Since I saw you

last I have been wickedly injured. Now I have always a pain in my eyes: there are two flames behind them, which burn day and night."

"I grieve for you," said the Child, with exquisite tenderness; "yet, dear boy, for all that, you might be ready for Christmas: but is there not also a pain throbbing and burning in your heart?"

"Oh, if you mean that, I am tossed up and down by vexation: I am full of hatred against that terrible Jasper. It was all about a miserable Christmas candle he carried. I broke it by pushing him down. Tell me, was he right to fly at me like a wild beast? Ought he not to suffer even as I have suffered? Is it just, is it right, for the great man's son to put out a peasant boy's eyes, and be happy again?"

"Misguided Jasper!" said the Child, solemnly; "let him answer for his own sin: judge not, little brother."

Christobal hid his face in his hands, and wept for shame.

"Shall I give you ten golden words for a Christmas gift? Will you hide them in your heart and be happy?"

"I will," answered Christobal.

"They are these," said the Child. "Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

Christobal repeated the words, a soft light stealing over his face. "I will remember," he said, looking up to meet the pleading eyes of the Child: but, lo! the whole face had melted into the aureole; nothing was left but light. Yet Christobal was filled

with a new joy; and, as he opened his eyes, his dream, if dream it were—changed, becoming as sweet and solemn as a prayer. It seemed to him that the roof of the cottage glittered with stars, and was no longer a roof, but the boundless sky; and, afar off, like remembered music, a voice fell on his ear, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your trespasses."

Christobal arose, and, although still blind, walked in light. "It is the aureole which has stolen into my heart," thought Christobal. "The pain and hate are all gone. Now I am ready for Christmas. I wish I could help poor Jasper, who has such a weight of guilt to carry!"

Next day, Burgundy saw no happier boy than Christobal. He walked in the procession at night, carrying a candle whose light he could not see; but what did it signify, since there was light in his soul?

Hark! In the midst of the Christmas chimes breaks the jangling of fire-bells. The Count's house is on fire! The sparks pour out thicker and faster; tongues of flame leap to the sky; the bells clang hoarsely; the Christmas procession is broken into wild disorder; the wheels of the engine roll through the streets, unheard in the din. Christobal rushed eagerly toward the flames, but was pulled away by the people. "We cannot drown the fire!" they cried; "the building must fall! Are the inmates all safe?"

"All, thank heaven!" cried the Count. "No;

Jasper! See! he waves his hand from the third story! Save him! save my boy!"

Jasper had set fire to a curtain with his fatal Christmas candle. Now he raved and shouted in vain: no one would venture up the ladder.

"O Holy Child," whispered Christobal, "give light to my eyes, even as unto my soul! Let me save Jasper!"

At once the iron band fell from Christobal's vision. He saw, and, at the same moment, felt a supernatural strength. He tore away from the restraining arms of the people; he rushed up the ladder, and reached the window, heedless of his scorched arms. "Jasper!" he cried, seizing the half-conscious boy, "be not afraid: I have the strength to carry you." And down the ladder he bore him, step by step, through the crackling flames. Jasper was revived; and the fainting Christobal was borne through the streets in the arms of the populace.

"Wonder of wonders!" was the cry.

"It was The Holy Child," gasped Christobal. "He opened my eyes; he guided me up the ladder, and down again!"

"Hallelujah!" cried the people. "On the birthday of our Lord, the blind receive their sight."

"It is a triumph of faith," said some reverently.

"A miracle," murmured others.

"Not a miracle," replied the wise doctors, after they had first consulted their books; "it is only the electrifying of the optic nerve."

"Dear little Christobal," sobbed the broken-

hearted Jasper, "how could you forgive such a wicked boy as I?"

"It was very easy," replied Christobal, "when once The Holy Child called me 'brother,' and bade me pray for you."

"Oh, that I could repay you for your wonderful deed of love," said Jasper, through his tears.

"Do not thank me," whispered Christobal, with a look of awe; "thank The Holy Child. And when he comes again next year, to ask what feelings we hold in our hearts, let us both be ready for Christmas."

SOPHIE MAY

AT CHRISTMAS-TIDE

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

AT Christmas-tide, fair friends, forego
Your ancient feuds, and far and wide
Disseminate love's golden glow,
At Christmas-tide.

In fellowship and faith abide,
Deny to all the name of foe,
For sake of Christ, the Crucified.
At Christmas-tide.

Rejoice in Error's overthrow,
Refute the doubters that deride,
And loud the Gospel bugle blow,
At Christmas-tide.

SUSIE M. BEST

COMIN' CHRISTMAS MORN

By permission of Messrs. Forbes & Co., Chicago

(*Should be given in Santa Claus costume*)

I'M goin' to start next Saturday;
It won't take more'n a day
To visit the United States
In my new toboggan sleigh.
I've sent Jack Frost ahead o' me
To sort o' find a road,
So my deers 'll find it easy
'Cause I've got an awful load.

But they've had lots o' exercise,
An' know the way by sight;
I've speeded them to Baffin's Bay
An' back here 'fore 'twas night.
An' once I drove to Puget's Sound
An' once to Behring Sea;
I had ter make a trip up there
To get a Christmas tree.

I wish't you all could see my house,
Built out o' cakes o' ice;
I guess you think it cold inside,
But no, it's awful nice.
All carpeted with sealskin rugs,
An' ermine, mink and sable;
I'm going to keep it furnished so
As long as I am able.

An' no gomphobers in the north
Can steal 'round unawares,
Because my castle's guarded by
Two great big polar bears.
So if a burglar man should come
An' try to break into it
They'd squeeze his life out in a jif,
I've taught 'em how to do it.

Just right around behind my house
Is where I keep the toys,
That I am comin' south'ard with,
Fer all good girls an' boys.
My big cold storage warehouse stands
Right by a frozen tarn,
An' right along aside o' it
I have my reindeer's barn.

So never mind, they're both piled full
Of everything on earth
With Christmas gifts till you can't rest,
I don't know what they're worth.
An' four big sea dogs set outside,
Two walruses, a seal
That knows so much if you'd come nigh
He'd be the first to squeal.

The purtiest sight you ever saw
'S when things is lit up nights—
You know we don't have gas up here,
But use the Northern Lights.

An' forth from every icicle
A dazzle spreads away
That turns the hull big frozen zone
Into one mighty day.

From where I live I'd have you know,
It's truth, upon my soul,
I don't have very far to go
To see the big North Pole,
Where Uncle Sam has pinned his flag,
There's where the cold wind pipes,
And flaunts the emblem of the brave,
The proud old stars and stripes.

I'm coming, children, coming, yes,
You ought to see my sleigh,
And hear the tinkle, tinkle, as
I speed along the way.
Through forests bare, o'er snowy plains,
As sure as you are born,
Old Santa Claus is coming, and
Will be here Christmas morn.

BEN KING

A CHAPTER FROM HUSTLER'S CAMP.

By permission of "The Epworth Herald," Chicago

HUSTLER'S CAMP was somewhat exercised over the newcomer, who, in truth, did not look as if he belonged there. A number of men paused in

their work and looked after the figure in rusty black as it descended the rugged path on the hillside,—a slender figure and slightly stooped, with gray showing plainly in the fringe of hair beneath the well-worn hat.

"He said he was a colored porter, but he was a lyin'," observed Dirk Collins. "He ain't no more of a nigger 'n I am ——"

"Which ain't sayin' much for the difference," interposed a companion, with a glance at the naturally dark face now long unshaven and browned and roughened by years of exposure.

Dirk waited until the laugh at his expense had subsided, then calmly proceeded: "An' he ain't no porter, neither, never was; anybody can see that by lookin' at him. Nigh as I can make out he's some kind of a book-peddler."

"One o' them tract slingers, likely, an' he's come to a poor market," said a brawny fellow named Sam.

Little Jim leaned on his pick and looked wistfully after the retreating form. Jim was only a boy, who had drifted into the camp, nobody knew how or from where, and they had all fallen into the way of calling him "Little Jim," though he undertook a man's work with a courage that won for him what no amount of asking could have done, and he was allowed to stay. It was not the proper place for a boy, one would have said, but there was no proper place on earth for Jim, so far as his few years on earth had enabled him to discover; and this one, rough as it might be, was not the worst he had known.

If occasionally ill-luck or much drink rendered some one tyrannical or abusive, there was usually somebody else sufficiently generous or sufficiently quarrelsome to interfere in the boy's behalf.

"An' they're a good deal like this yere mine—mighty rough and unpromisin' on top, but with good streaks in 'em, if ye can once git down to 'em. I wish that book man could do it."

It did not seem a probable consummation. The newcomer was gently patient, but persistent and very much in earnest. If his attempts to enter into conversation were rudely repulsed one day, his tone the next had lost none of its kindness. If his invitation to a meeting was refused with a curse or a sneer, it did not prevent the proffer of a leaflet. He scattered them everywhere.

"You can track that feller all over the diggin's by 'em," grumbled Dirk, holding up one. "It's all the job I want to scratch along in this world, an' I hain't no time to 'tend to no other. It's gittin' monotonous, an' I wish he'd git out o' this."

"He won't till he's starved out, but that ought to be before long," declared Sam. "He's gittin' thinner'n more bent over every day. If he hain't sense enough to know when he's struck a place that won't pay, 'twould be a mercy to give him a hint."

"A good histin'—one that would skip him out lively," interposed another voice.

The irritable wish and rough jest were bandied about until they gradually changed to a purpose, a plan born of a moment's caprice—the irresponsible mood of a crowd.

"The next time we git sight of him anywheres we'll lay down the law, an' give him twelve hours to skip out o' this."

Little Jim listened uneasily.

"You don't have to wait to git sight of him; I can tell you where to find him," he said, with a sudden resolution. "He lives in that little old cabin up round the turn, 'cross the gully."

"Ho! Come to stay, has he, an' got his nest all fixed? It's likely he'll change his mind. We'll go up there to-night. It's Christmas Eve, an' we got to have some sort of a celebration."

When night fell a self-appointed committee of five men drew toward the light that streamed from the cabin. Home missionary dwellings are not usually sumptuous in their furnishings, and the little log cabin on the hillside had no soft hangings to shut out the gathering darkness. The interior was clearly revealed to the committee. No lone man bending over tracts or Bible; but a neat room, plain almost to bareness, but wondrously bright and homelike to those eyes which had seen nothing like a home for so long. There was a strip of rag carpet on the freshly-scrubbed floor, a print framed in twisted branches on the wall, a home-made lounge, with a pale-faced woman reclining upon it, while a little girl, with a grave, housewifely air, was brushing up the hearth.

Involuntarily the men drew nearer to the window and gazed. Before any one had time to utter a word the little girl, turning, caught sight of some one, and eagerly threw open the door.

"Is it you, papa?" she called.

"Sissy, is your pa in?" asked Dirk, lamely enough, as they found themselves discovered.

"Not yet, but we're looking for him. Won't you come in?" answered the small hostess, a trifle dismayed, but rallying her hospitality.

The five men filed solemnly into the cabin. There was a limited supply of chairs, but with a rude bench and a little crowding, they were all seated. The invalid on the lounge attempted to speak to them, but the weak voice failed to make itself understood by any one but the watchful young nurse.

"Yes, mamma. She wants to tell you," turning to the visitors, "that papa'll be home soon; but she can't talk much yet, 'cause she's been so sick. I guess it was the way the roof leaked made her take cold; but papa patched it, and I'm keeping house now so she will get rested and strong. I can do it pretty well."

"'Course, sissy, you do it first-rate," declared Sam, as if he had made a study of housekeeping.

She was only a plain, brown-faced little maiden, enveloped in a coarse check-apron, but she and her surroundings seemed to have a wonderful fascination for these strange guests.

When she attempted to replenish the fire, Dirk proffered his assistance.

"My hands is bigger'n yours, sissy—see how much bigger!" and he gazed at the small fingers as if the child's hand were a marvel.

When for a few minutes she was silent, one of the

men nudged Sam and asked in a whisper if he couldn't "set her agoin' agin."

It was easy enough. She was a sociable little body, and the few awkward questions drew ready replies—an artless story which unconsciously gave glimpses of many a hardship and privation. The pale-faced mother only smiled and listened. Presently the child broke off a sentence abruptly and turned toward the door.

"There's papa!"

When the master of the house beheld his callers, his face betrayed his surprise, though he greeted them pleasantly. As for the guests, suddenly recalled to a remembrance of their errand, they glanced furtively at each other and were silent for a moment.

"Parson," broke forth Dirk desperately, "we've come—we've come to—that is to say if you'll hold a preachin' down to the camp Christmas night we'll all be there, an' a lot more of the fellers." He concluded with a savage glance at his companions, which challenged them to dispute at their peril; but no one offered the slightest opposition. They drew a long breath of relief, indeed, as the astonished preacher appointed the hour for a meeting, and quietly took their departure. Half way down the winding path a figure dodging behind the tree was anxiously watching their approach. Sam espied and pounced upon it, dragging little Jim into the moonlight.

"You young rascal, did you know there was a woman—a sick woman and a little gal up there?"

Jim, under the shaking, muttered something that might have been an affirmative.

"Then why didn't ye say so?"

"'Cause I wanted ye to go an' see," ventured Jim, feeling that the hand on his collar was, after all, not a very angry one.

There was an unusually quiet session around the camp-fire that evening, and the pipes were smoked meditatively.

"When I was a youngster, 'way back east," said one of the party, "they uster have donation parties, or somethin', for the parson, an' carried him slathers of things."

"That's the talk," said Dirk, with sudden lightening of his dark face.

"Go up to Hard Licks to-morrow, make 'em open up, and scoop the store."

The proposition was carried by acclamation. Hard Licks was not a large town, but it had a high opinion of its own importance, and its shop-windows were gorgeous. These latter furnished the chief suggestions concerning what would be useful in a poor missionary's family, and the buyers were lavish. More critical people might have objected to a crimson silk dressing-gown for the invalid, and gay sashes for the sober little maiden did not harmonize with their surroundings; but the committee from Hustler's Camp was not critical, and indulged its eye for color regardless of expense. Useful articles went with the finery, however, and the little cabin on the hillside was fairly inundated with comforts and luxuries.

"Blest if our parson shan't live like other folks' parsons," said Sam, voicing the sentiment of the camp.

And the patient, persevering minister looked up with eyes grown dim and whispered:

"Dear Lord, I want to win these souls for Thee, and Thou hast opened wide the door."

AT CHRISTMAS-TIME

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

AT Christmas-time on Judea's hills
The moonlight falls with silver glow,
And shepherds watch their flocks by night,
Just as in ages long ago.
At Christmas-time our hearts still turn
With loving thoughts to that far day,
When angel hosts proclaimed the birth
Of Him who in the manger lay.

Though centuries have passed away
Since earth its Christmas-time first knew,
The centuries that are to come
Will celebrate His birth anew.
The light of Bethlehem's wondrous star
Has shone through all the ages long,
And 'round the world on wings of love
Has rolled the angels' glorious song.

W. G. PARK

ROGER KENT'S HOME-COMING

By permission of "The Home Defender," Chicago

HIS head ached and his heart ached. He was very young, he thought, rebelliously, to be so unhappy—hardly more than seventeen; and he had tried so hard, during these last six months he had spent in the city, to delude himself with the idea that he was as happy and contented as a boy could be. He had been earning a fair salary, and was his own master. What more could a boy wish? And yet—he was very, very miserable just now. He had gone to the store that morning two hours late, with this same headache throbbing at his temples. One of his employers had called him into his office, and had talked severely, though not unkindly, to him.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Kent," he said in conclusion; "but we can have no drinking men in our store. You have good parents and a good home in the country, if I've heard aright. Take my advice and go back to them. I came from the country myself when a lad, and I know the temptations that beset a young man unused to city life. Unfortunately, I couldn't have gone back if I had wanted to. The cashier will pay you the amount due you. Invest the money in car fare, like a sensible fellow."

Roger rushed blindly from the store, not seeing the look of sympathy that Hal Fleming gave him. He never wanted to see Hal Fleming or his clique again. It was they who had brought this trouble and disgrace upon him. They had urged him again

and again to take "just one little sip" of the strong concoction they had brewed in Hal's room, and at last he had yielded—through shame. They had applauded, and he had sipped a little more, and that was all he remembered about it the next morning when he awoke, faint and dizzy and miserable.

Yes, he had actually been ashamed to do what was right. He felt as if the mark of his shame were on his forehead.

He slipped from the glare of the electric lights of Sixth Avenue into the gloom and quiet of a narrow side street.

The choir of one of the little churches was rehearsing the songs for Christmas.

Roger leaned wearily against the sleet-covered iron railing of the fence, and heard, as in a dream, the deep tones of the organ and the sweet, boyish voices as they sang. He could not hear the words, but somehow the music quieted him. The anger and bitterness seemed all gone from his heart.

He could see the little Connecticut farmhouse that he had left, with a passionate, rebellious heart, simply because his father had denied him a few privileges he had thought were his by right. He knew now—as he had half known, but never confessed, all along—that his father was in the right.

Should he take his employer's advice and go back? He knew what his welcome would be—that his mother would laugh and cry with joy, and that his father would be glad, too, though he might say little. He would be there in time for the Christmas holiday. An unpleasant lump rose in his throat as

he thought of the loving remembrances that he had always received.

There was a letter in his inside coat pocket. It was short and badly written, but it was from mother! Roger thrilled as he whispered the word, and it was very precious to him just now. He passed his hand over his breast to feel if it were still there. His father had been ailing a good deal lately, she wrote. He missed Roger's help, and he seemed to take very little interest in the plans for next year's work. Then she had spoken of Christmas. There was a tear stain on the signature, "Elizabeth Roger Kent."

But hark! Some one was singing a solo in the church, and as the yearning pathos of the sweet voice fell upon Roger's ear, a great sob shook his frame and a mist of tears blinded his eyes.

When the beautiful hymn had ceased, he made a vow in the solemn hush that followed—that he would not rest until he had clasped his mother in his arms, and had gotten the blessing of his father's forgiveness. He felt in his pocket to determine just how much money he had.

There was a five dollar bill and some change in silver. "More than enough to take me home," he said, "and I shall be able to begin with a dollar in my pocket. But my heart will be as light as my pocket, and it's been as heavy as lead all the time I've spent in the great, crowded place I'm leaving behind me."

Roger's heart beat almost to suffocation as he drew near the brown house at the end of Low Lane

at dawn. The roseate gleams in the east were like an omen to his softened mind. There was a light in the front window, shining straight toward the two gaunt, bare poplars by the gate.

"Mother's up and stirring," whispered Roger, tapping lightly on the door, with a trembling hand.

Mrs. Kent opened the door with joy beaming in her eyes. Roger held her in his arms many minutes before either spoke.

"I've been expecting you, Roger," she said simply. "I got up early to see if the lamp was all right in the window. It's been put there every night since you went away."

His father was not demonstrative by nature, but there were tears in his eyes, and his voice trembled as he gripped Roger's hand and said: "Merry Christmas, my son, and God bless you!"

ANTHONY E. ANDERSON

AN UNFORTUNATE

By permission of "The Constitution," Atlanta, Ga.

I DES so weak en sinful,
Or else, so old en po'
Dat Mister Chris'mus done fergit
De number on my do'.

I tell him: "Heah I is, suh!
You been dis way befo'."
But Mister Chris'mus done fergit
De number on my do'.

I see him fin' de rich folks
  Dat des don't want no mo' ;
But—good Lawd knows he done fergit
  De number on my do'.

I wonders en I wonders
  Des why he slight me so?
I hopes de Lawd 'll show him
  De number on my do'.

FRANK L. STANTON

A LEGEND OF THE CHRIST-CHILD

By permission of "The Ladies' World," New York

IT was dark and cold in the cottage,
  For the fire was burning low
And the one rushlight was hoarded.
  The hand of the midnight snow

Beat, beat at the narrow casement
  Like the clods on coffin thrown.
And a mother, widowed, and young, and fair,
  Sat holding her child, alone,

When, hark ! a knock at the doorway—
  Unbidden a guest came in ;
A trav'ler, aged, and bent, and frail,
  And cloak wrapped to his chin.

"Good Hausfrau, lost on the mountain
A wandering one am I;
Oh, give me a place and a fire and a sup
Or else in the storm I die."

She paused—one hoarded rushlight,
A meagre handful of food,
And to keep her child from the bitter cold
A bundle of kindling wood!

Could she give of her store? Oh, hush! oh, hark!
From the steeples far below
The wind was bringing the Christmas chimes
Through beat of the falling snow.

And she said: "For the sake of the Christ-child
I give you all my store;
For the Christ-child goes on Christmas Eve
With blessings from door to door.

"Perchance there are some who need Him more
With whom He is called to stay;
He has missed my door this Christmas Eve—
'Tis far up this mountain way—

"And He astray in the snowfall
May be seeking a place to rest;
For He is only a Kindchen,
Like the weanling at my breast."

She rose and went to the cupboard—
And 'twas stored with wholesome food!

Amazed, she sought for a fagot —
And the basket was heaped with wood!

She turned to the ragged stranger,
And lo! in his humble stead
Stood one in a shining whiteness,
With a halo 'round his head —

The snow beat at the casement
Could not drown the steeple din —
When she opened her heart to the beggar
The Christ-child had entered in!

MARY CLARKE HUNTINGTON

A CHRISTMAS COFFEE POT

By permission of the Author

HE was only ten years old, and he ought to have been in school, of course; but his father was dead, and his mother almost an invalid, to whose slender and uncertain income from her needle Benny's two dollars a week at Haines's General Store was no mean addition. Some weeks, indeed, his earnings were greater than hers. Those were proud moments for Benny, and, oh, how they made him yearn to be earning ten dollars a week in the store, like Hank Sellers! Hank was Benny's ideal of a great man, for he could blow smoke through his nose without coughing; he could lift a barrel of salt; throw anybody in town in a wrestling match,

and break the wildest colts that were ever brought to him. Benny learned in Sunday-school and from his mother that some of these things were not nice; yet, if they weren't, why did a great man like Hank Sellers do them?

Every Saturday night Benny hurried straight home with his two silver dollars; in the beginning he also conscientiously carried home the occasional nickel or dime which he picked up in return for some little favor done a customer. But one day his mother told him, with a queer little catch in her voice, that hereafter he could have these extras for himself. He kept them after this, but whatever he bought with them—candy or licorice-root or an orange—he always shared with little Elizabeth and his mother.

Since September, however--and it was now next to the last week in December—he had not spent a penny. Why, was a secret into which he had let no one but little Elizabeth. He was going to make the first Christmas gift of his life, and it was to be to his mother! But what? This was the question he had pondered for days. He had considered at least a dozen articles, always carefully bearing the cost in mind, but no sooner would he decide on any one of them than all the others would at once take on new charms, and thus undo his decision.

What he wanted was something that his mother really needed and would use every day, but which at the same time would be beautiful and enduring, and would not cost over seventy-five cents. It proved a difficult combination, and he was begin-

ning to despair, when one morning at breakfast, just four days before Christmas, his mother said: "Benny, dear, I guess you'll have to take the coffee-pot down to Mr. Conrad's again. It has sprung another leak." In that moment the inspiration came. He would get her a new coffee-pot! Not a plain tin affair like her old one, which was battered and soldered in many a place, with its spout twisted and the button gone from the lid; but a gorgeous one of white-and-blue granite-iron, such as he had seen in Conrad's window.

That very afternoon, after school, Elizabeth, following instructions, stopped at the store for her brother, for the selection of the coffee-pot was a responsibility not to be assumed by any one person. Benny got excused for a little while, and the diminutive pair hastened toward Conrad's hardware store. They paused in front of the window, and Benny eagerly pointed out the pot which he had chosen, contingently, earlier in the day. "Ain't it a beauty, Lizzie?" he asked.

"It's awful pretty," she murmured.

"How much does it cost?"

"I ain't asked yet, but Hank says that no granite-iron coffee-pot ever made ought to cost over seventy-five cents; and he knows, 'cause he used to work in a hardware store. We'll go in and ask, if you think it'll do."

"It's beautiful, brother."

"Do you think it's too big?" he interrogated anxiously.

"Oh, no. I think it's just right."

"Then I'll ask. Wait till I count my money again."

He drew from his trousers-pocket half a handful of pennies, nickels, and dimes, and after some study found that they totaled seventy-five cents—just the amount he should have had. Then he paused for one final glance at the gorgeous pot. It was in that fateful moment that his eyes fell on a pot which had somehow escaped him hitherto—a beautiful vessel which shone like silver, with a fancy curved spout and figured handle, a very king of coffee-pots, in fact throned high above all the rest. He gasped, and in that instant the glory of the granite-iron pot faded forever, and it became a common, plebeian thing.

"Look at that silver one!" said he, in a hopeless tone.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "I wish we could buy mother that one; but I expect it costs ten dollars, don't you?"

Benny shook his head, too dejected to show his boyish scorn of her ignorance. "It don't cost that; no coffee-pot costs that—except a king's, mebbe. But it costs too much for us."

He fastened his longing blue eyes on the glittering object again. It seemed to shine with even more effulgence than before, and he pictured to himself, with an aching heart, the glow that would come to his mother's face if he could only make her such a magnificent present as that. "Lizzie," said he, almost tragically, while his lip quivered, "I ain't goin' to get mother a coffee-pot, after all. I'm goin' to get her something else."

"What you goin' to get her?" asked Elizabeth, greatly disappointed at this outcome of their momentous shopping expedition.

"I ain't decided yet. I'll think it over. You stop at the store to-morrow afternoon again. But I wisht I hadn't seen that silver coffee-pot," he added, sadly.

On the way to work next day he could not resist the temptation to stop and look at the silver coffee-pot again. Some fairy must have polished it over night, for it reflected the morning sun in a manner that was fairly dazzling. Each time that day that he passed Conrad's window with the delivery wagon —and he went out of his way several times to do it —he turned a pair of hungry eyes toward the object of his desires. Once, during the afternoon, he saw Mr. Conrad showing it to a lady, and his heart sank. He also felt some resentment, just as if the pot were his, and not Mr. Conrad's. But when he came back, there was the king on his throne again, looking, if possible, more royal than ever.

"Lizzie," said he, desperately, when the pair once more stood in front of the window, "I ain't thought of anything else yet, and I'm goin' to ask Mr. Conrad how much it's worth."

Elizabeth's eyes opened wide at this venturesome declaration.

"Mebbe he won't like it, Benny. He knows we're too poor to buy it."

"I don't care," answered Benny. "I heard Hank Sellers ask a man the price of a thrashin'-machine once, and he didn't have the money to buy

it. And mebbe that pot don't cost but seventy-five cents."

They climbed the steps of the old frame building. It was with a feeling of relief that he noted the absence of any other customers in the store.

"Mr. Conrad," he began, with a tremor in his voice which he could not quite control, "I want to look at your coffee-pots. I want to get mother one for Christmas. How much is that—that silver one in the window, with the crooked spout?"

Elizabeth tightened her grip on Benny's hand as Mr. Conrad stepped to the window and lifted the beauteous thing down. "Do you mean this one? That's a dollar and a quarter, Benny."

There was silence for a moment, intense silence.

"I suppose it's solid silver," said Benny, trying to muster a matter-of-fact tone, but struggling with a lump in his throat.

"No; it's nickle-plated; but for all practical purposes it is as good as silver. Do you think you would like it?"

Benny shook his head. "I ain't got the money," he answered, almost inaudibly.

"We have some cheaper pots," said the merchant, kindly. "Some as low as a quarter." But Benny again shook his head. "I wanted to get her something nice. I—I wouldn't take no pleasure in a cheap pot after seein' that one. Come on, Lizzie."

"How much money have you, Benny?" called the merchant, as the children reached the door.

"Seventy-five cents."

Conrad hesitated, and glanced at the bottom of

the pot. It was marked o—m, which meant that it had cost, just as it happened, seventy-five cents. Then he glanced at the diminutive pair. They were about the age of his own two children. "Benny," said he, with a smile, "this is the season of peace on earth and good-will to men; and I am going to let you have this pot for seventy-five cents."

Benny's eyes lighted wondrously for an instant; then the radiance faded, and he said, in a hard little voice, without turning back, "I don't want you to give it to me, Mr. Conrad."

"I am not giving it to you; seventy-five cents is just what it cost me, and I often sell goods to favored customers at cost. You and your mother have always been good customers of mine, and I should be glad to have you take this pot at seventy-five cents."

"All right, sir, if you put it that way," answered the proud little boy; and once more he counted out his change, fearful lest a penny or two might have got away, and thus at the last moment vitiate the sale. But it was all there. When the pot was wrapped Benny lifted it down with a sense of tremendous responsibility.

"Suppose you'd fall down and smash it, Benny," suggested Elizabeth, awesomely, as they trudged over the icy sidewalks.

"I ain't goin' to fall," said he, confidently. "I've carried things as valuable as this before—glass, too. But never nothin' for mother."

"Suppose a horse runned over you," continued Elizabeth.

"I ain't liable to be runned over by a horse when

I drive one myself every day. Hank says old Ned's got the hardest mouth of any horse in town."

Benny expected to smuggle the coffee-pot into the house on Christmas Eve. He had not yet decided whether he would softly arise some time in the night and tie his gift to his mother's stocking—he would hint beforehand that it would be well for her to hang it up along with his and Elizabeth's this year, —or whether he would set it in the cupboard, in place of the old pot, and let her find it when she went to make coffee in the morning. Each plan had some feature to recommend it. But meanwhile he deemed it wisest to keep the precious gift at the store, although just where to stow it was a serious question. Under a counter it might get dented; on a shelf it might fall off, especially if there should happen to be an earthquake. Moreover, if such a valuable thing were left in an exposed place, burglars might find it out and break in and carry it off. Finally Hank Sellers, whom Benny took into his confidence, hid the pot in a drawer under some rolls of cotton batting.

Benny's work day ended at six o'clock. About half-past three o'clock on Christmas Eve the telephone in the store rang vigorously. Mrs. Rosecrans wanted to know why the two pounds of raisins she had ordered for her Christmas pudding had not been delivered. Hank Sellers hung up the receiver with a growl. Mrs. Rosecrans lived outside the village limits, about a mile and a half from the store. Benny had been out there twice that day in the delivery wagon with baskets full of Christmas cheer;

but Hank had overlooked the raisins in putting up her order. Mrs. Rosecrans was Haines's best customer, and could not be disappointed, although the horse had been put away for the day.

"Benny," said Hank, in a tone not intended for his employer's ear, "do you suppose you could hitch up old Ned by yourself and take two pounds of raisins out to old lady Rosecrans? I can't leave the store now, and she'll have a fit if those raisins aren't delivered."

Benny had never hitched up the horse, but he was not the boy to admit, especially to his idol, that he was unable to do a thing before he had tried it. So a few minutes later he trudged over to Haines's barn with the bag of raisins under one arm. Hank had told him that he needn't come back again that day, so under the other arm he carried the precious coffee-pot. Arriving at the barn, he seized old Ned's forelock with a reassuring "Ho, boy!" as Hank always did, and unbuckled the halter. But old Ned, having done his day's stint of work, was not to be harnessed again, especially by this pigmy. So he snorted, threw up his head, and derisively cantered out into the barnyard. For fifteen minutes Benny coaxed and chased, stumbling over the frozen ground, and bruising his bare hands till they bled, but the wary old Ned would neither reënter his stall nor allow himself to be caught. So Benny resolved to walk out to Mrs. Rosecrans'.

It was half-past four o'clock when he reached the big house, and the sun was nearly down to the tree tops in the west. A few flakes of snow were drift-

ing as he started back, and before he reached the public road they were falling thick and fast. He decided to take a short cut across a large tract of meadow. The old snow in the meadow proved deeper than he had thought, and his wet feet soon got very cold, but he cheered his flagging spirits by hugging the coffee-pot tighter, and picturing his dear mother's smile when she should receive her present in the morning.

Presently he found himself in a grove. He was greatly surprised at this, for he knew that no trees grew in the meadow. He had been floundering along with his head down, and now, looking up to get his bearings, he discovered that no landmarks were visible. Snow, snow, nothing but snow.

By this time the pulpy brown paper had been rubbed from the coffee-pot. Benny's brave little heart failed him, and he began to cry in short, hard, bitter sobs; he had an irresistible desire to sink down in the snow and rest, but the thought of home and mother and the Christmas entertainment at the church kept him going. Elizabeth, made up like a fairy, was to sing a song at the church, and he did not want to miss that. And the next day was Christmas!

The lethargy which cold and excessive fatigue produce was fast overcoming him when he was rudely jarred by bumping into something. Although utterly indifferent to his surroundings now, he knew from the feel and smell of the object that it was a strawstack, and he sank down in the litter of straw with a strange but delightful sense of

languor; closing his eyes with a smile, he began to repeat:

"'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."

Then, muttering in a fitful way a part of the little prayer he made each night at his mother's knee, he fell asleep.

There, three hours later, the searching party with their gleaming lanterns, found him, with the coffee-pot clasped in his arms,—in a stupor which is the precursor of death.

When he regained consciousness, his mother was sitting beside the bed.

"Have I come home, mother?" he asked, in a mystified tone.

"Yes, darling. The men—the good, kind men—found you and brought you home."

Then the memory of the present flashed over him.

"And is it Christmas yet, mother?"

"Yes, it is now two o'clock, and really Christmas."

"Did you hang up your stocking?"

"Yes, don't you remember that you told me at dinner yesterday to be sure not to forget it?"

He burst into tears. "You won't get nothing now, mother," he sobbed. "I lost it in the snow!"

"Oh, no, you didn't, darling! You had it in your arms when they found you, and you held it so tightly that they let it stay in your arms till they got you home—that beautiful, beautiful coffee-pot, finer than mother ever had before or ever hoped to have. Mother shall always be so proud of it. But

how much prouder she shall always be of her noble boy, who, in all his pain and despair, out there in the darkness and storm, would not abandon his present for her!"

"Mother," he said, with radiant face, "I knew you'd talk like an angel when I gave it to you. That's one reason why I did it,—just to hear you. But I wanted you to have it, too," he added quickly, just before her lips smothered his speech.

ELMORE ELLIOTT PEAKE

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